

RAISING AWARENESS AMONG FREQUENT CHURCH
ATTENDEES ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND
ABOUT THE HEALING LOVE OF GOD

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ABSTRACT

RAISING AWARENESS AMONG FREQUENT CHURCH ATTENDEES ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE HEALING LOVE OF GOD

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The context is South Union Mennonite Church in West Liberty, Ohio. The problem within it is little awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. If the developed curriculum was implemented, then subjects may better understand low self-worth. The implemented curriculum raised awareness through a six-week Sunday School and sermon series. A pastoral discussion with each subject occurred. Assessment included pre and post surveys, checks for understanding, and an interview. Results from twenty-one subjects included nine correctly defining low self-worth and fourteen correctly identifying two or more signs of low self-worth.

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I am so very thankful to all those who have helped with this dissertation and project. First, I thank my Father and Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, who steadfastly helped me through the Holy Spirit on so many occasions. I thank my wife, Kathrine, and my two children, Thomas and Gwen, who supported, encouraged, and sacrificed so much for me to be able to do this project. I thank my parents for their encouragement and support. I thank my church, South Union Mennonite Church, for all their support in giving of their time, energy, finances, and prayers for this project. I thank my context associates for their time and loving input. I thank Dr. Elvin Sadler, Dr. Willie Eugene Marshall, and Dr. Madeline Hennes for their input, guidance, and encouragement. I thank Dr. Al Kennon for all his early support and input. I thank my professional associates, Dr. Matt Lewis, Dr. Shawn Oliver, and Dr. Matt Fullen for all their time, energy, and input in this project. Finally, I thank God once again, who deserves all praise, for all things are in his hands and by his will.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated two-fold. First, it is dedicated to Kathrine, Thomas, and Gwen. May you always know how much God loves you and how much worth you truly have. Second, I dedicate this to all those who experience low self-worth. May you know the healing grace of our loving Lord.

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From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see everything has become new!

— 2 Cor. 5:16-17, NRSV

INTRODUCTION

This project addresses raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God among frequent church attendees at South Union Mennonite Church. It was identified that there may be unidentified self-worth issues at South Union Mennonite Church and in me. This project implemented a self-developed curriculum seeking to raise awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. The hypothesis was that if the developed curriculum was implemented, then South Union would be more aware of low self-worth and the healing love of God. Based on the data, the project met with mixed results.

Four learner goals were identified to be met by the curriculum. First, subjects were expected to know the definition of low self-worth. In order to define low self-worth, self-worth and the reason for using these terms must be explored. My definition of self-worth is the positive evaluation of one's worth. The primary meaning of "self" in this definition is one's being or existence. This is to be separated from the character, actions, and or life situation of the individual. From my Christian standpoint, self-worth is the positive evaluation of self by means of knowing the reality of God's love and one's identity as a child of God.

The concept of a self-evaluation being at the core of self-worth is like self-esteem, at least in some definitions. Collins, licensed clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Purdue University, defines self-esteem as "the evaluation that

an individual makes about his or her worth, competence, and significance.”¹ One reason self-worth is used instead is to specifically limit the focus of this project (intentionally excluding competence and significance). Second, self-esteem in a popular way also includes “confidence” in one’s own “abilities” which is not the focus of this project.²

Self-worth is directly linked to the Christian virtue of humility. Humility is the clear, realistic understanding of one’s own position in relationship to God, to self, and to others.³ The relationship between humility and low self-worth will be described in the chapter three.

Low self-worth is the negative evaluation of self, or a negative self-appraisal. This definition was sought to be taught during the curriculum to meet learner goal one and was used during this entire project. Chapter two is particularly helpful in discovering how this definition, and the signs of low self-worth, function in the life of Gideon from the book of Judges.

The second learner goal was to know some signs of low self-worth. Signs of low self-worth, used throughout this entire project and taken from a related word (self-esteem), may include:

Feel isolated and unlovable. Tend to withdraw from other people. Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves. Be angry at others or at themselves, but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention. Have difficulty getting along with others. Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily. Have lower

¹ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 425-426.

² “Self-Esteem,” Google Search Dictionary, accessed November 24, 2018, https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=P6T5WCkJ6TSjwTWraCQCg&q=self+esteem+definition&btnK=Google+Search&oq=self+esteem+def&gs_l=psyab.3.0.0l10.1580.5136..6051...4.0..0.141.1480.18j1.....0....1..gws-wiz.....0..0i131.PxygAC8PZOY.

³ Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 10-11.

curiosity or creativity. Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others...Be jealous or critical of others. Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression. Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others. Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love. Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.⁴

Important to understand is that not every sign may present itself in a situation of low self-worth, but several should be present to establish appropriate identification of low self-worth.

The end of this learner goal was for subjects to be able to identify two or more signs of low self-worth. Particularly helpful on this note is chapters two and three, both of which show how the signs of low self-worth work in both the life of Gideon and the life of a Quaker, John Woolman.

The third learner goal was for subjects to learn how to position self or help position another for healing from low self-worth. A broad range of subjects were explored in order to help subjects learn how to be positioned or how to position another for healing. Every chapter has some specific applications for this purpose. Chapter two suggests how trauma may impact self-worth in some situations. Chapter three identifies how guilt and shame can impact self-worth, and therefore the importance of learning how to deal with guilt and shame to be positioned for healing from low self-worth. It also identifies Dallas Willard's Vision, Intention, Means (VIM) method as being helpful for being positioned for healing. Chapter four identifies *ubuntu* Christian theology, the *imago dei*, community, and forgiveness as being crucial for healing for low self-worth. Chapter five discusses each of these ideas with psychology, which helps to clarify and support many of the ideas found therein. It also explored the idea of the inner critic, the

⁴ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 433.

knowledge of which can help to combat the inner workings of the mind that perpetuates low self-worth.

It was expected that subjects would meet learner goal three by being able to articulate some of these different points and ideas by applying them to how to be positioned for healing or help another be positioned for healing by the love of God from low self-worth.

The fourth learner goal was for subjects to articulate a belief about the severity of low self-worth. This was emphasized in chapter two, especially in the end points of Gideon's life. Learners were expected to be able to articulate a belief about how severe they thought low self-worth was by the end of the curriculum.

The data revealed that the hypothesis met with partial success. Learner goals one and two were met by some subjects. Learner goal three was met in a vague sense, but subjects were unable to articulate curriculum-driven responses to questions about this learner goal. Learner goal four was met by some subjects. This data is worked through thoroughly in chapter six.

Chapter one provides a brief overview of the context for the project and me, the researcher. Chapter two provides an in-depth analysis of Gideon, especially focusing on Judges 6:11-13. This chapter utilizes the signs of low self-worth to provide evidence for Gideon having low self-worth, unveils the severity of low self-worth, and provides some direction for a possible relationship between trauma and low self-worth. Chapter three provides an in-depth analysis about John Woolman's early childhood, his low self-worth surfacing from guilt and shame, and the VIM methodology which can be seen in John Woolman's life. Chapter four explores *ubuntu* Christian theology, *imago dei*, community,

and forgiveness. These topics were all helpful for learning how to be positioned and how to position another for healing by the love of God from low self-worth. Chapter five discusses all the ideas found in chapters two through four with psychology. Chapter six provides an in-depth analysis about the outcomes from the implemented curriculum. The ministry focus is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

It is said by some faculty of United Theological Seminary that God never places a minister in a context that does not have the same problem as the pastor. This chapter is meant to specifically describe an issue that is found in both the context, South Union Mennonite Church, and its pastor, me. It will then elaborate on my skillset and interests which can be utilized to assist in researching and resolving the described problem. Finally, a theme statement and hypothesis are developed as the foundation for this project.

Context

Two key findings about South Union Mennonite Church are important to consider when thinking about a topic for a dissertation project. First, South Union Mennonite Church has no weekly or monthly prayer meeting for the congregation to come together and seek the Lord. Second, South Union does not have an outreach ministry to the local community. Upon examination of these findings, and correlating evidence, the hypothesized underlying problem preventing these things from happening is a sense of low self-worth in the congregation. These two findings will be analyzed to see how they uncover a sense of low self-worth in the congregation. Correlating evidence shows that South Union has redirected time and effort away from corporate prayer and ministry

outreach to low-risk service projects. The analysis of the two key findings and the correlating evidence combine to give me the impression that, at this time, South Union may wrestle with low self-worth. If low self-worth is to be healed, in South Union and in me, then the first step is to raise awareness that low self-worth is a prevalent issue in society and in some in the congregation. Healing from low self-worth may help us to live into the advancement of God's Kingdom and into a ministry to which we have been called.

Several causes of low self-worth include unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, experiences of defeat or failure, faulty theological thinking, and community influences and myths.¹ Various items in South Union's history lend to thinking that some of these causes may be present and may have caused low self-worth among some of its members and in the community as a whole.

First, fifty to one hundred years ago, legalistic attitudes around attending church functions may have created poor feelings because of the unrealistic expectations that legalistic attitudes caused. For example, having been forced to attend prayer meetings in the past, congregants may no longer desire to attend community prayer meetings. This idea is reinforced by the lack of community prayer meetings at South Union.

Perfectionism is partly rooted in the church discipline that occurred around 1880-1900. South Union was historically known for strict church discipline and adherence to cultural legalisms. For example, an exodus of young people occurred in the late 1800's because top buggies (vehicles pulled by horses with tops to cover the riders from snow, rain, and sun) were not allowed. Individuals were disciplined for driving buggies with

¹ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 429-432.

tops on them. Non-adherence to the ‘laws’ resulted in shunning, or the practice of cutting someone off from church fellowship and community life until a process of repentance and restoration was worked through. In a legalistic environment, criticism became secondary nature as individuals looked to keep everyone else, and themselves, in line. Anything, and anyone, “unacceptable” was rejected.

Second, a serious decline in membership and attendance has occurred over the last twenty-five years. The congregation once filled with every generation alive is now a mostly retired aging community. Some may perceive this decline in membership as a failure because many people of younger generations left during church splits caused by various pastors and personalities.

Third, among those who are aging, some may experience health loss and a decline in ability to function as they once did. This can also be experienced by some as a defeat or failure, specifically a failure of the body and mind to no longer do what was once done. This may also cause some to experience low self-worth.

Only a few in the congregation will admit to having low self-worth. Many believe they have a healthy sense of self-worth. However, given the experiences of the church community and the experiences common to many who age, it would be wise for the congregation to learn about low self-worth, its causes, and most importantly how to be positioned for healing from low self-worth.

One of the suspected causes of low self-worth is faulty theological thinking, specifically regarding community prayer meetings. If people do not prioritize God and each other by holding congregational prayer meetings, then there is a real sense that South Union itself is considered not worthy, i.e. is not worthwhile, to come to together

and pray for. In some way, perhaps minimally, they do not think that the church is worthwhile enough to come together to pray for. This may be one signpost that there is low self-worth in the congregation.

Another evidence of low self-worth is the difficulty of recruiting new leaders from among the congregation. Many congregants at South Union do not feel or believe that they are qualified for church leadership and, therefore, do not believe that God can work through them and lead them through a period of leadership duties. One aspect of this is fear of criticism, which is evident in the history of South Union. However, a spirit of criticism can also flow from low self-worth. Criticism can destroy another person's sense of self-worth before God and wound them permanently.²

Another piece of contemporary evidence that there is low self-worth at South Union is the fear of rejection displayed in some parts of the congregation. Individuals express a fear that their young pastor will leave their older congregation for another place of ministry simply because there may be better opportunities elsewhere (better salary, younger people, more energy). If the congregation had a healthy sense of their self-worth before God, this sort of sentiment would not be expressed. The congregation would know their place before God as children, as princes and princesses who are siblings to King Jesus, and they would have confidence that God's best care would be given to them, no matter who was the pastor, because they are worthy of God's best.

The above descriptions of low self-worth do not touch many of the personal stories that people have within the congregation. These range from familial criticisms and rejection to church criticisms and rejection, which had substantial impact on

² Charles H. Kraft, *Deep Wounds Deep Healing*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2010), 75.

individual lives. For example, young boys learning to sing in the choir were told to simply “mouth it” if their voices were less than perfect. This created significant wounds for those boys, damaging their self-worth. Therefore, they stopped worshipping through singing in church, rejecting the voices that God had given them to praise him.

It is apparent that low self-worth can be found within the history of South Union as a congregation. There is evidence that these problems also exist among some at a personal level within the congregation. The positive effects of having awareness about low self-worth and the healing love of God includes being more aware of how low self-worth and its effects work, what it looks like when operating in relationship with someone else, how to relationally behave towards someone with low self-worth, and how to help them to be positioned before God to be healed from low self-worth. If South Union is going to walk in the fullness of God’s Kingdom vision for the church, these problems must be healed by Jesus Christ.

Ministry Journey

My ministry journey ran a parallel course to the history of South Union and left me in a similar spiritual location –experiencing low self-worth. It has been identified that I was legalistic in my outlook for many years while growing up. I used behavior modification to curb sinful desires and sins, which failed. Self-hatred resulted from an inability to grow in holiness as expected. Spiritual wounds of all sorts were caused during this period, including great wounds to my sense of self-worth.

The desire, even need, to destroy sin in my life stemmed from a sense of rejection by God. I believed that God saved me through Jesus and the Cross, but certainly did not

like me or accept me as I was. Instead, the forgiveness on the Cross demanded a return – holiness. This was something I as a young boy was not able to live into in my own power, and I rejected all parts of myself which could not live up to this ideal. As a young boy, I rejected my emotions as something which might lead me into sin. I rejected the parts of myself which gave birth to sin. I rejected my own hobbies, such as video games. In the right place, and in the right time, they would be acceptable to God, and therefore acceptable to me as well. However, this balance was never achieved, and drove a low sense of self-worth for many years.

I believe this long period of my life was dominated by something I entitle “worm theology.” Worm theology meant that I was a lowly sinner stuck in sin whom God was ashamed of, and certainly did not like. Worthiness, and God’s trust, had to be earned through being righteous, even though my soul was saved by Jesus Christ. This lived theology led to a poor spiritual life and ultimately led to a hardening toward God.

This conflicted and confused theology was remedied when I encountered Jesus Christ and when I learned to focus on him as the full revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-4; Jn. 14:7). This great shift in my image of God changed my prayer life, my spiritual life, and my practical life. It gave a tremendous sense of self-worth to understand that God loved me so much that he would give Christ up for me – and that with Jesus God will give everything else (Jn. 3:16; Rom 8:32).

However, the hunt for holiness was not over, just changed. It was learned that transformation happened from the inside out in God’s Kingdom. The key to transformation was moving into and staying in God’s presence. Then, in God’s timing,

spiritual formation would occur to eliminate sin and sanctify me. It was discovered that the primary way to move into God's presence was the historical spiritual disciplines.³

A second component to transformation was the healing of old wounds, whether emotional, spiritual, or relational.⁴ The healing of the root wounds often took care of the sinful behaviors flowing out of those wounds. I have experienced some healing in this manner, finding victory over sin and growing in Christlikeness because of it.

It should be noted that the continued pursuit to become better, to be more spiritually formed, to grow in holiness, to become closer to God, is rooted in a place of low self-worth and a desire to perform to please God. While not always the case, it can certainly be one of the roots of longing for holiness. Problems still arise. Often, I will still condemn myself for things that are not sins. A fear of rejection shows itself in the lack of obedience to the movement of the Holy Spirit. There is a fear that I will be rejected or punished by God for not obeying the Holy Spirit. There is a fear that I will be rejected by my church for doing something "odd" by following the movement of the Spirit. There is great confusion and fear of rejection surrounding whether I hear the Spirit speaking or the enemy speaking. Instead of obeying what I hear and learning from the experience, I freeze in fear trying to discern who I am hearing without realizing that God's love and grace is greater than a few mistakes made while learning to discern the movements of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry journey that I have experienced prepared me with a few skills and a few interests that relate to both myself and the context. My interests include spiritual and

³ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1988), 67-68.

⁴ Kraft, *Deep Wounds*, 74.

character formation through the traditional spiritual disciplines (seen in authors such as Richard Foster and Dallas Willard), and an interest in the inner healing of people's wounds, especially people's image of God. There is a great desire to see Jesus Christ glorified and seen as precious, unfathomable, and as the clear revelation of the Father. These things are a deep part of discipleship to Jesus, which is crucial for living a righteous life that is pleasing and acceptable to God, and the best possible life for the disciple. A final interest is learning to work with and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit so that things that are not humanly possible are made possible. For example, the healing of an inner wound or shift in someone's image of God are possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit. No amount of preaching or teaching will produce healing or create a clearer picture of God in someone without the Holy Spirit.

Each of these interests directly apply to the problem about low self-worth. The interest in spiritual disciplines, specifically as ways of encountering God and positioning human beings to be transformed by God, and the interest in inner healing from old wounds align with solutions to problems of low self-worth and self-rejection that have been identified.

The skillset offered is an ability to teach, preach, listen, study, and pray. I preach and teach with a reasonable amount of clarity and ability. I am known to be a good listener in conversations. I study well, and continually work to develop my prayer life with God.

These skills will be important to the planned project. Teaching and preaching are primary ways of explaining information needed to the congregation so that the inner healing work can be set up in the best possible way. Although complete understanding is

not needed for God to work, some understanding can help people realize their need for healing and to take part in the healing that God will offer in relation to low self-worth and self-rejection. The skill of studying will be helpful to best prepare people for the information, but also in researching various methods of helping people heal in one on one settings. Listening well will be crucial throughout the process so that the pastor and project remains relevant to the problems and experiences of the congregation. Finally, a developing prayer life is always essential. Inner healing will not take place unless the Holy Spirit shows up and does his work. Ultimately, everything is dependent on God being present and working. If God does not show up, the entire project will simply be the form of a doctoral project but lacking the power that flows when something is done in the Kingdom of God.

One item that must be stated is my complete lack of awareness about low self-worth, about of the importance of low self-worth, and how to be positioned for healing by the love of God or how to position others for healing by the love of God. Before this project began, I was relatively clueless about what low self-worth was, why it mattered, and how it could affect my life. Positively, throughout this project my own awareness has been raised about these important issues.

Intersection of Self and Context

Several points of intersection exist between South Union Mennonite church's history and my own story. At one time, South Union Mennonite Church was exposed to strict legalism. I enforced strict legalism on myself. The context experienced some faulty theological thinking. I also experienced faulty theological thinking, particularly in regards

to “worm theology.” There are some experiences with legalism existent in both my life and the history of this context. Both of these experiences can be causes of low self-worth. In my case, low self-worth was directly produced. This was also true for some in the congregation.

Develop the Synergy

I intend to explore the topic low self-worth. This will specifically consider raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. It is suggested that as awareness about low self-worth is raised, people will look to be able to position themselves or help position another for healing by the love of God. This education will position the church to continue to grow in Christ and equip them with a possible ministry to the community.

Some in South Union and its pastor both share low self-worth, which may have developed from overly strict discipline seeking to conform individuals to certain behavioral standards defined in a legalistic way. This bred a critical spirit in the history of South Union and in the pastor’s life, causing anything that did not measure up to expected standards to be rejected. Low self-worth expressed as self-rejection at the communal church level and in an individual’s life led to the inability to see God’s full love and acceptance.

However, the problem with inner habits, character, and wounds is that they cannot simply be cut out and cut off. Jesus provides a brilliant critique of this legalistic and critical reaction to problems in the heart and mind in Matthew 6:27-30. While speaking about adultery, he takes the problem of self-rejection to the extreme, telling legalists to

follow through fully with their solution to the problem: if a body part causes someone to sin, cut it off or tear it out, and throw it away. Of course, this has never resolved any spiritual or behavioral problem. As Dallas Willard helpfully points out in his commentary on this passage, someone can cut off every limb, gouge out their eyes, cut off their ears – and still have lustful thoughts in their mind.⁵

The importance of raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God is primarily in what lies after raising awareness about it. After the curriculum, those in the church with low self-worth can begin to position themselves for healing by the love of God. Those who already have healthy self-worth can intentionally create community to help position others for healing. The entire church can also relate in positive ways to the community in helping others who struggle with low self-worth.

Without the redemption and transformation of all parts of the self for healing, full participation in God's Kingdom vision for South Union and me will not occur. Some in South Union and I struggle with these intersecting issues, and both need to find healing for them.

Based on this convergence, the topic to be explored is low self-worth and the healing love of God. This topic has multiple components for exploration with certain intended outcomes, all of which must be explained if the trajectory of God's will be seen. However, in this doctoral project, only the first step will be the focus of the project. The first step is to raise awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. Part of this is to draw out the fullness of God's acceptance and love for human beings, just as they are. The second is to elucidate the difference between the "flesh," "sin," and

⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1997), 167.

God's process of sanctification in an individual, so that those parts of self that were rejected can be reclaimed, healed or transformed, and sanctified. The third component is to discover the meaning of union with Christ, so that the full worth of the individual is known, and the full power of God's grace can operate in and through an individual's and church's life. All of this must be accomplished in the authority and power of the Holy Spirit, or surface level changes will be all that occur.

Raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God is the first intended step with several interlocking parts. The first piece is to explore what scripture states about low self-worth. This will be done in chapter one through an investigation of Gideon, someone who struggles with low self-worth.

The second piece is to discover what, if anything, church history has to say about low self-worth. This will be done through a study of John Woolman, where the effects of guilt and shame on low self-worth will be explored, and a methodology for being positioned for healing will be examined through the early life of John Woolman.

Third, a study of who humans are to God will be done in order to provide a basis for healthy self-worth. Two theological concepts, Christian *ubuntu* theology and *imago dei* will be studied in order to undergird a foundation for healthy self-worth and a means of being positioned for healing from low self-worth by the love of God. Within this study, community and forgiveness will both find their places as crucial elements for being positioned for healing from low self-worth.

Fourth, a study of psychology, both Christian and secular, will be undertaken in order to undergird, dialogue, or challenge the claims made while researching the other

chapters about low self-worth. Each major claim and or topic will be investigated in psychology in order to shed more light on the material.

Ultimately, being positioned for healing by the love of God involves clarifying the image of God to be the God who fully lives out the realities found in scripture: that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8-10), that God loves humans enough to die for them while they are sinners (Rm. 5:8), and that God sent his son Jesus for the entire world (Jn. 3:16). This is a reality to be immersed into, so that the love which surpasses all knowledge saturates the soul, which can lead to a safe place for intimacy with God and others without fear of rejection, so that even the dark parts of ourselves may be brought forward into the light and accepted for what they are (Eph. 3:16-19, 5:12-14; 1 Jn. 1:5-10).

Diving deep into the infinite love and knowledge of God, and the acceptance God offers, will enable us to risk accepting ourselves, the good and the bad. It will begin to heal the lack of self-worth, and therefore the various signs of it.⁶ Relational healing with self, with others, and especially with God will take place as God's love displayed through Jesus is focused on and brought to reveal the fullness of God's character.

The second step of complete healing, after the raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God, is to clarify the difference between the "flesh," "sin," and God's process of transformation (Rom. 7:14-8:39). This is a crucial step. Although, God fully accepts humanity as they are, without any condemnation, there is an end goal in mind for all those who are a part of God's kingdom (Rm. 8:1, 29). In fact, living into full discipleship, or becoming fully human as Jesus is, means to put on Christlikeness and live out the type of righteousness that Jesus commands (Col. 3:1-17;

⁶ Kraft, *Deep Wounds*, 75.

Mt. 5-7). Being transformed into Christlikeness will lead to fuller and deeper levels of healing as those parts of self which were rejected for being sinful are transformed into the holiness and righteousness that God has for us (Eph. 5:22-24). This is the full freedom and easy burden Jesus desires for us to receive – righteousness from the inside out (Mt. 11:28-30, Lk.11:39-41; Mt. 12:33-37, 23:25-26).

Another aspect of this sanctification and discipleship is to fully discern which parts of the previously rejected self needs to be transformed, and which parts are simply to be accepted because they are not evil but were rejected due to cultural legalisms in the church or in one's upbringing. Discernment will hinge upon a clear understanding of the "flesh" and "sin" as defined and found in scripture and upon hearing the Holy Spirit speak into present circumstances and situations that biblical authors may never have imagined.

Finally, with each of these steps moving into place, South Union and I will experience some level of wholeness in union with Christ. This means that our sole identity, the deepest part of who we are and the primary self-descriptor, will be as a child of God united with him in his Kingdom. Those in union with Christ dwell in a deep relationship with God that orients the everyday, practical life and relationships to the Father, turning the ordinary into events of eternal significance. Empowered by the grace of God, freedom from all fear is found during such high-value events, and instead love and service become the primary fruits of life.

From such a position of deep trust in God, greater risks in ministry and vulnerability in intimacy will become possible, allowing the Holy Spirit to move and work in ways previously unknown to those who needed healing. A true ministry that

touches the deepest needs for belonging, healing, and significance will be found and made available to the surrounding community. The Kingdom of God will advance forward in West Liberty, Ohio through the healing of self-worth that is experienced within South Union.

My ministerial skills and interests are directly suited to the task described above. Christian spiritual formation and discipleship have been a topic of passionate study, and I am equipped to teach and preach biblically on such a subject. Inner healing seems to be part and parcel of spiritual formation because it deals with wounds and blockers to discipleship. I have experienced inner healing and have studied the topic moderately during and since seminary. Preaching and teaching are key aspects of both these topics and will be used to teach God's acceptance and love which can lead to participants acceptance of reality, the full process of discipleship and sanctification, and the discernment of what needs to be transformed and what should be accepted as a gift from God without condemnation.

The Project

The nature of this doctoral project will be the first stanza of a larger poem, setting the stage and pointing the way towards a greater journey. In this project, the congregation will have its awareness raised about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. The intended outcome of this step is for the congregation to be equipped with knowledge and tools through the teaching of the developed curriculum about low self-worth.

Many tools were a part of this first step. One tool was a six-week sermon series exploring the concepts about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. The second tool was a six-week Sunday school class that coincides with and goes deeper than the sermon series. A third tool was pastoral discussions, allowing the subject to reflect and dialogue with me one on one around the topic of the curriculum.

Means of measurement for the project were pre and post surveys, checks for understanding, and an interview after the pastoral discussion. First, pre and post surveys before and after the sermon series and Sunday school class gave a general sense of comprehension about low self-worth, about the healing love of God, and about how to be positioned for that healing. Second, checks for understanding were distributed and collected after each sermon and Sunday School to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum in educating subjects about the information for that session. Recorded pastoral discussion post-interview allowed the subject to orally communicate their understanding of the curriculum material immediately after a time of dialogue with me about that material.

Twenty-two frequent attendees agreed to be subjects in this project. They were asked to listen to sermons, Sunday school, and participate in a single pastoral discussion during the project period.

There was one intended outcome for this project, which can be broken down into different learner goals. Subjects were to have a better understanding about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. Learner goals for subjects included being able to define low self-worth, being able to list some signs of low self-worth, being able to

identify how to be positioned or help another be positioned for healing by the love of God, and being able to articulate a belief about the severity of low self-worth.

Therefore, this doctoral project is the first of four such projects. This project will lead into the next project on communal prayer. After that, discipleship endeavors will need to be undertaken so that discernment between sin, the flesh, and holiness can be accomplished, and people can grow in holiness without reducing their own self-worth. The final step in this series of projects will be the outreach ministry to the local community that offers healing in the same pattern that South Union received it.

This project contributes to the field of pastoral ministry and pastoral counseling by contributing the knowledge and experience of the curriculum at South Union to the larger picture of God's healing and reconciliation in the world. This contributes particular knowledge to the field, which is the effectiveness of the curriculum at South Union. It also contributes general knowledge to the given fields by dialoguing with research and making a substantial contribution through what is learned.

Conclusion

Some at South Union and I share an interlocking problem in our spiritual roots and heritage: low self-worth. Through an intimate relational knowledge of God's love in Christ Jesus, true self-worth can be found, leading to full acceptance of self which will eventually lead to the redemption and healing of those parts of self which are infected by sin. Therefore, South Union needed to cultivate knowledge about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. The first step is to search the scriptures for foundational knowledge about low self-worth, which the next chapter turns to in its study of Gideon.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Low self-worth is a result of a wound or wounds that can be found across the world and through history, including in South Union Mennonite Church and in her pastor. Another place low self-worth can be found is in the Gideon narrative in the Book of Judges. Exegeting a portion of this narrative will be helpful in exploring issues around low self-worth and possible implications for raising awareness about low self-worth and worth found in God's love.

Introduction

In exegeting Judges 6:11-13, part of the Gideon Cycle, five components of an educational curriculum about low self-worth are found. The first component is an awareness that experiences in the history of a person's life can cause the wound of low self-worth. Second, Gideon shows how severe the resulting effects of unhealed low self-worth is. Part of this component is using Gideon as an example of low self-worth by analyzing and critically showing how the signs of it manifest in Gideon's life. Third, faulty theological thinking as a cause of low self-worth is noted, particularly making a link between Gideon's life and Jeremiah 2:5 in the application section of this chapter. The fourth component shown in Gideon's life is God's desire to heal low self-worth, and fifth, that this healing in Gideon is so that God's purpose for Gideon might be fulfilled.

Specific applications to the developed curriculum will be reserved until the end of this chapter as there is a great deal of work to do before these applications can be made.

The character of Gideon in the Gideon Cycle has not been critically analyzed by scholarship that has been read (those sources listed in the bibliography) through a psychological definition and or signs of low self-worth. Assumptions and opinions are given on Gideon and his words without an explicit attempt to receive insight from basic psychology. A representative sample of recent scholarship will be critiqued, not for their lack of insight, but for the glaring absence of critical analysis of Gideon as a real human being, specifically one exhibiting low self-worth, and the poor conclusions reached because of this absence. Not one study could be found that brought psychological tools to a narrative critical study of Gideon. A companion piece to this criticism is the false portrayal and characterizations of the “angel of the Lord” found in Judges 6:11-12, which compounds the general confusion and diverse opinions regarding Gideon’s person. After this critique, the hermeneutical lens of analysis is quickly detailed. A concise understanding of God through a canonical criticism is explained.

The explanation of the interpretive lens leads to a careful analysis of Gideon, which seeks to make bold conclusions to fill in the character of Gideon and bring to the foreground the wound of low self-worth. All tools or criticisms that do not help to analyze Gideon through the established lens are purposefully disregarded in this chapter. This character analysis shines light on low self-worth for others to see.

Critique of Current Gideon Scholarship

Several critiques of current Gideon scholarship and the Gideon Cycle can be detailed, beginning with the foundations. Two underlying roots of poor analysis exist, which can be shown to be true through the poor characterizations of Gideon. The first root is the seeming lack of considering Gideon as a real human person who existed in historical time and space and whom Judges chapters six through eight represents with accuracy. This leads to surface conclusions regarding Gideon's character which lack a psychological analysis (specifically around low self-worth) and prevents readers from uncovering the deep healing that God seeks for Gideon to experience. The second root issue is the a priori statements and or assumptive conclusions made regarding Gideon's character without the associated logical reasoning and or argumentation from the surrounding context, specifically without help from psychology, which can assist in the analysis of Gideon. Examination of scholarship around two verses, Judges 6:11-12 will be enough to reasonably argue for these two root issues.

Judges 6:11 informs the reader that Gideon "was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites."¹ Two representative conclusions regarding Gideon surround this action. Tokunboh Adeyemo, deceased General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, characterizes Gideon as being "so fearful" of the Midianites that he threshed the wheat in the wine press.² Susan Haddox, Associate

¹ Biblical citations throughout this document are from the New Standard Revised Version unless otherwise noted.

² Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Judges," *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive, 2006), 302.

Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at University of Mount Union, calls Gideon a “wimp” and concludes in her summary that, “The scared wimp at the beginning of the story, while he seems an unlikely hero to the reader, is the perfect instrument of YHWH’s deliverance, because he has little masculine battle prowess of his own, and is willing to submit to YHWH’s will.”³

Issues with these conclusions are many. First, the text never states that Gideon is afraid of the Midianites in this verse. It implies that he desires to hide his action of providing sustenance for him and his family from the Midianites. While fear is most likely involved, courage could also be involved since Gideon is still resisting the Midianites by providing for his family within a context where oppressors stripped the land of food (Jdg. 6:3-4).

No questions or studies are available concerning the role of oppressors and the role of subjects in such a society to determine if Gideon expresses unusual courage in an oppressive environment or if Gideon is indeed as fearful as commentators suggest. No arguments are made in favor of Gideon being fearful or in favor of Gideon simply hiding his threshing so that food for his family will not be stolen. These are different questions to address, as doing an action in secret does not necessitate a feeling of fear. If it does, there are no arguments made which inform and support this necessity. These are simply noted to show the inadequacy of current character studies in recent scholarship.

Worse than asking no questions is the assumptive conclusions of a scholar such as Haddox, who labels Gideon as “a wimp.” Without fully investigating a psychological

³ Susan E. Haddox, “The Lord is with You, You Mighty Warrior: The Question of Gideon’s Masculinity,” *Proceedings* 30 (2010): 70-71, 86, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

reason or reasons for Gideon's actions, she concludes a priori that he must be weak or cowardly, based on her perception of threshing wheat in a winepress. Neither of these can be substantiated for there is (by definition) no argument to substantiate it. A note must be made here: it is not that Gideon could not be weak or cowardly, it is not that Gideon does not experience fear (Jdg. 6:27, 7:10-11); it is that there is no psychological analysis and logical argumentation to support the claim that the fear expressly stated elsewhere is to be read into Gideon's character to define him in every instance as a "wimp." To be fair, Haddox is purposefully looking for ways in which Gideon does not conform to the ancient ideas of masculinity, but this simply emphasizes the point that there is no good scholarship providing a well-reasoned psychological analysis of Gideon to root work such as hers upon.⁴ Analyzing Gideon through a lens of self-worth will help to create such a foundation.

A second issue around contemporary scholarship revolves around the angel of the Lord's greeting to Gideon in Judges 6:12, specifically the latter portion of the greeting which reads *gibbôr heḥāyil*, "mighty warrior." The first component of misinterpretation around this greeting rests in the identity of the angel of the Lord and the character of this messenger, which then flows into the interpretations of the passage. Zero commentators and articles that were researched used a canonical understanding of God to inform their interpretation of the greeting. Therefore, major voices in the field, such as Block, Gunther H. Knoedler Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Wheaton College, make interpretative guesses about the greeting instead of reasoned arguments. Block's guess is that the greeting could designate flattery or an incongruity, which turns both parts of the

⁴ Haddox, "The Lord is with You," 71, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

greeting into different questions for the reader.⁵ There is no reasoned argument for why the messenger of the Lord, later identified as God himself (Jdg. 6:14, 16, 22-23), would ever use flattery to address a human, or why the messenger would speak to Gideon in order to cause questions to erupt from Gideon.

Other guesses from major voices (such as Webb, Senior Research Fellow in Old Testament at Moore Theological College, and Butler, former Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Baptist Theological Seminary) include assigning the greeting of “mighty warrior” as a prescription of what God will transform Gideon into, or as a designation of selection as God’s tool, without considering if there is evidence that it is a descriptive greeting of Gideon.⁶ The problem here is again the a priori argument made for their conclusion. Their statements imply two things. First, Gideon could not already be a man of skill in war, and second, because Gideon could not be a mighty warrior the messenger’s greeting must be prescriptive or a form of lying, such as flattery. The conclusion could be true, but there is no logical argumentation to support the point, which both a canonical view of God and a psychological analysis of Gideon could provide.

Regarding this same verse, Lee Martin, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, states “Unlike Othniel, Gideon has no previous experience as a warrior or as a leader, and the hearer of the story might

⁵ Daniel I. Block, *The New American Commentary: Judges, Ruth* (Nashville, TN: B and H, 1999), 259-260.

⁶ Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary: Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 201-202; Barry G. Webb, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 229.

wonder why Gideon is chosen as a judge.”⁷ Martin does not make an explicit argument for this claim, but upon investigation one finds Othniel fighting in Judges 1:13. Therefore, the claim that Othniel has previous experience as a warrior and probably a leader can be substantiated.

However, Martin has an underlying, unexpressed argument that moves something like this: the author of Judges mentions Othniel’s previous fighting experience, and does not mention Gideon’s previous fighting experience, therefore Gideon does not have any previous fighting experience. This argument is hard to substantiate fully, specifically since there is a multitude of unknown soldiers throughout the book of Judges (Jdg. 1:8). To expect the author of Judges to always name every individual with previous fighting experience is too great an expectation to push on to the text. The key issue is that there is no attempt to discover if there are clues in the Gideon cycle (Jdg. 6-8) that might indicate or open the door for Gideon having previous fighting experience.

Since Martin was influenced by an underlying, unspoken argument that does not hold its ground upon examination, he makes the case that God chooses Gideon not for any natural fighting abilities, but for Gideon’s knowledge of the exodus traditions and knowledge of the issues of syncretism.⁸ He then interprets the angel of the Lord’s greeting as a “commission,” which is a conclusion based on an unarticulated argument about Gideon’s fighting experience.⁹

⁷ Lee R. Martin, “Power to Save!?: The Role of the Spirit of the Lord in the Book of Judges,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. 2 (2008): 32, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

⁸ Martin, “Power to Save!?” 33, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

⁹ Martin, “Power to Save!?” 33, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

Martin, as well as the commentators previously critiqued, are not short on insight, useful information, or some helpful opinions. The critique is not that their positions are fully wrong. The issue comes down to the two roots initially described: a lack of a psychologically informed character analysis of Gideon, and a priori or assumptive conclusions without close argumentation to support those claims. Scholars will still be used to support or provide insight on various points throughout the argument presented below. Next, this chapter establishes a hermeneutic that helps to build a careful, logical, robust, psychologically informed character portrayal of Gideon.

Hermeneutical Tools: Canonical and Narrative Criticism with a Psychological Component

Two main criticisms are used to examine Gideon in Judges 6:11-13. Canonical criticism is used to inform the personality and purpose of the angel of the Lord, who is named as God (Jdg. 6:11, 12, 14). Narrative criticism is used to focus the text to literary aspects, including narrator, setting, characterization, plot, and character discourse.¹⁰ A psychological component is added to this, specifically looking for signs of low self-worth in Gideon's characterization.

The canonical portrait of God must always be drawn with Jesus at the center of the mind because Jesus perfectly reveals God (Heb. 1:1-4, Jn 14:8-10, 2 Cor. 4:4-6). It should be noted that this is a very typical Anabaptist position for reading scripture, and is

¹⁰ Richard G. Bowman, "Narrative Criticism: Human Purpose in Conflict with Divine Presence," in *Judges and Methods: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed., ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 20-32.

articulated academically by Greg Boyd, Ph.D. Princeton Theological Seminary.¹¹

Therefore, in this chapter, God is interpreted through the lens of his Son, Jesus, which greatly impacts the reading of Gideon and insights around low self-worth.

Next, narrative criticism is used to maintain a literary focus on Gideon. Narrative criticism focuses on the character, specifically what the text reveals about the character. The careful reading and analyzing of the text is combined with the use of a psychological component. Particularly important to this character study is a definition of low self-worth and expected symptoms and or signs of this wound. Understanding this helps to define and direct the speculative interpretation of the character of Gideon so that more authority can be claimed, and a fuller understanding of elements of healing low self-worth may be explored. A full discussion of a definition and components of low self-worth occurs in the chapter five. A short description was given in the introduction (pages one - three).

Context: Gideon's Background

With the preliminaries undergirding the exegetical work complete, the task can now be set upon. It is necessary to first discuss the text surrounding the selected passage of Judges 6:11-24. The Gideon cycle begins with elements indicating the start of a cycle: “the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord” (6:1), the punishment (6:2-6), and the cry for deliverance (6:6-7). This punishment is particularly bad, as the Midianites attacked during the planting season, encamping against Israel to such an extent as to destroy the produce and leave no food in Israel, including sheep, ox, or donkey (6:3-5). Sasson,

¹¹ Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 45; Gregory A. Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 40.

recently the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible at Vanderbilt University, notes that this attack was meant to be permanent, destroying the Israelites with the purpose of occupying the land themselves.¹² The text specifically states that no ox was left in Israel: “thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian” (6:4, 6).

In this political and economic oppression, Gideon lived at least part of his life, for some length of time that is unspecified in the text.¹³ This may have resulted in trauma that could potentially correlate to low self-worth in Gideon and in the nation, something that Butler also notes using the words “self-esteem.”¹⁴ O’Connell, author of landmark work *Rhetoric of Judges*, notes the same, suggesting Gideon is a miniature version of Israel.¹⁵ Gideon seems to note this as well in 6:13. The link between low self-worth and trauma needs to be more fully investigated in the interdisciplinary chapter. Collins does not note trauma as a cause of low self-worth.¹⁶

One question that impacts the interpretation of this text is whether Israel ever attempted to fight back against their oppressors. To answer this, one must evaluate the meaning of “The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel” (6:2). Sasson references four texts where the Lord hands over someone to Israel up to this point in Judges, listing them

¹² Jack M. Sasson, *Anchor Yale Bible: Judges 1-12* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2014), 329.

¹³ Bernon Lee, "Fragmentation of Reader Focus in the Preamble to Battle in Judges 6.1-7.14," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26, no. 3 (March 2002): 71 fn. 11, accessed July 4, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

¹⁴ Butler, *Judges*, 197.

¹⁵ Robert H. O'Connell, "The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 63 (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1996), 163.

¹⁶ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 430.

as Judges 1:4; 3:10, 28; 4:14. In each of these, it is to Israel's advantage.¹⁷ In all these contexts, the advantage is specifically a military advantage and the phrase is used in the context of a war. Whoever's "hand prevails" over another is the one who wins the battle or war being discussed. There is no reason to interpret these words differently in 6:2. The Lord has handed Israel over to the Midianites (6:1), and during times of war the Midianites hand prevailed over Israel (6:2). Presumably lives are lost, which can create a wound or trauma in people's lives. Collins writes that experiences of defeat or failure can cause low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority.¹⁸

Next, it must be asked if Gideon may have lost anyone during these preliminary battles/wars before he rose as judge. The answer to this question will need to be developed during the analysis of Judges 6:12. For now, there is one lead in the surrounding text that must be addressed, which is Gideon's strange, passionate pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna, kings among the Midianites (Jdg. 8). Gideon specifically asks them about an incident at Mt. Tabor, to which Zebah and Zalmunna answer they killed all the people, including two who were Gideon's brothers (8:18-20). Gideon then exacts revenge by killing both Midianite kings (8:21).

Determining when Gideon's brothers were killed could establish the possibility of deep trauma in Gideon, with a host of attached issues, such as shame about surviving when his brothers did not, and low self-worth at defeat. Review of the literature reveals unsound arguments, such as Butler stating the brothers are murdered, while Webb believes the brothers died during a conflict, perhaps close to home while Gideon is rising

¹⁷ Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 327.

¹⁸ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 429.

to power.¹⁹ Neither makes sense. Yairah Amit (Ph.D. Tel Aviv University) gives a detailed description of elements of oppression of a desert nation over another population (without a psychological aspect) and does not mention murder or execution as a routine component.²⁰ Webb's argument is simply awkward. He argues that as Gideon's power rose as God's chosen deliverer, while Gideon was routing the Midianites with trumpets and empty jars with torches in them (Jdg 7:15-23), seizing the waters with the Ephraimites along the Jordan (7:24-25), and putting the kings of the Midianites to flight (8:4-12), pursuing a vast army of fifteen thousand men with a band of three hundred because of his power from the Lord (8:10-12) – during this rise to power, a battle happened at Tabor in which Gideon's brothers died. This does not add up well.

The most probable explanation for the loss of Gideon's brothers is indeed a battle of some sort at Tabor, but before Gideon's call, somewhere during the time that the Midianites clearly, according to the text, had their "hand prevailing" over the Israelites (Jdg. 6:2). Understanding the loss of Gideon's brothers gives credence to a trauma which could lead Gideon to experience low self-worth. This argument for Gideon's background also helps clarify another portion of Gideon's call that often has confused descriptions, namely, the angel of the Lord's greeting in Jdg 6:12 (see below).

Gideon, Secretive Thresher (Jdg. 6:11)

The first mention of Gideon appears in Judges 6:11, where he is introduced as a son to Joash the Abiezrite, whom an angel of the Lord has come to meet. Gideon is

¹⁹ Butler, *Judges*, 220. Webb, *Judges*, 261.

²⁰ Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, trans. Jonathan Chipman, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 38 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 248.

found to be threshing wheat in the wine press to hide it from the Midianites because the Midianites did not leave sustenance in Israel (6:4, 11).

Webb notes this hiding may have been normal to survive.²¹ If the resourcefulness represented by Gideon is indeed a typical action to survive, then it would show an absence of creativity instead of being an act of creative resistance. It may be possible that this is one sign of low self-worth, though given the circumstances, it is tentative. It could also be a possibility that Gideon is capable of resilience in extreme duress, even if he has low self-worth.²² However, it also shows some motivation to defend oneself, at least to the extent of surviving in the face of the Midianites attempting to economically deprive all the Israelites, including Gideon's family. Other factors must be considered to establish grounds of low self-worth.

Next, it must be mentioned from above critiques on the field of scholarship, that there is a distinct inconclusiveness around what Gideon is feeling at this moment. He might be afraid, as the standard depiction of him assumes, or he might be angry, or shamed, or obstinate, or a range of reasonable emotions or combinations thereof. Nothing concrete can be said, argued, or is revealed from the text about what he is feeling without a full article length discussion of the psychological impacts of oppression on a subjugated people. This aspect of research is outside the scope of this chapter.

One question that many scholars have seemingly failed to ask is important to help establish the case of low self-worth: why is a son of someone who appears to be a prominent individual, with at least ten servants, in possession of a bull when no other

²¹ Webb, *Judges*, 229.

²² Matthew Fullen, interview by author, November 2018.

animals remain in Israel, threshing wheat when there is a multitude of servants to do the task (6:25, 27, 31-32)? Sasson is the only one who highlights this, stating:

One point of the notice is that Gideon could not be comfortable doing his deed in such a tight spot. Moreover, he was not acting his rank- for even in dire times, he might have used servants to do the task. From his own perspective, too, all this stealth could not have been dignified, let alone heroic.²³

It is possible that Gideon was valued so little by others that he was assigned this manual labor, especially according to his view of himself found in 6:15-16. Since his father protects him against the people of his city it seems unlikely that his father attributes to his son Gideon such low value that he would be assigned manual labor (Jdg. 6:28-32). A more probable explanation is Gideon's desire to thresh the wheat himself. Several signs of low self-worth are: the tendency to withdraw from other people, have difficulty relating with others, and have anger stored up towards themselves or others.²⁴ These signs seem to form a tenable explanation for why Gideon, with the position he has as son of an influential man, is doing such a chore. Threshing wheat in secret gets him alone and provides a place for anger to be worked out through manual labor, fulfilling several signs of low self-worth. It is, as Sasson suggests, not the most heroic of activities, which might compound his self-rejection and anger at self, even if he chose this task.

Another lingering and intriguing question must be asked: why would Gideon's father allow Gideon to perform such a task as threshing wheat? This question remains unanswered.

²³ Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 330.

²⁴ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 433.

The Angel of the Lord and his Greeting (Jdg. 6:12)

The angel of the Lord then appears to Gideon and states facts as a greeting: “The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior” (6:12). This greeting is controversial but can be reasonably understood using the canonical characterization of God. It is to be remembered that within narrative criticism, what the narrator states about a character is to be the most authoritative voice.²⁵ In the case of the messenger of the Lord, the narrator calls the messenger “the LORD” twice (Jdg. 6:14, 23).²⁶ The expected speech of the God who is seen in Jesus is one of truth and love that lights up the world so that truth can be seen clearly and rightly (Jn 8:12; 17:17; 1 Jn 1:5; Tit 1:2). Therefore, these statements spoken by the messenger, who is God, are descriptions of reality. First, God is with Gideon. Second, Gideon is a mighty warrior. His low self-worth prevents him from admitting this reality in the next verse, but Gideon’s perception does not change reality.

Now, this second point is critical, and must be argued because no other scholar that has been read makes this point. The first step of the argument is the one just laid out: based on the character of God, the greeting reflects reality. It is not to be limited to just a prophecy of what will happen, and it is certainly not flattery.

Second, other elements from the context must be pulled on to see how Gideon already having skill and being a mighty warrior makes things work. In Judges 6:33-34, the Midianites invade, and Gideon blows the trumpet as the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, and the entire clan follows him out immediately, without hesitation. The people of the clan do not yet know that Gideon is empowered by the Lord, and Gideon is

²⁵ Bowman, “Narrative Criticism,” 31.

²⁶ Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 135-140, 146-148.

a known idol breaker and defiler who has a god working against him (Baal, Jdg. 6:28-32). Therefore, there must be something that makes the town respond to Gideon's call without the knowledge of the Spirit of the Lord working upon him. Perhaps it is Gideon's reputation as a mighty warrior, or perhaps the Lord motivates them, or perhaps both. This is speculation, but it can be thought of as one step in this series of arguments.

Third, before any known fighting takes place in the context of Judges 6:11-8:1, there are two fascinating scenes that occur. Gideon sends many Israelites home without fighting at the command of the Lord (7:4-8). As the audience of this text, it is understood that the Lord is the one commanding Gideon, and therefore this battle belongs to the Lord. However, the Israelites are not told this by Gideon, and it is unknown if they knew or not (7:8). Instead, the Israelites follow Gideon blindly, seemingly without knowledge of the Lord's express working. As an aside, the lack of the express knowledge of the Lord's working, combined with the possibility of previous lost victories before Gideon's call to the Midianites, explains two things: the doubt of Gideon's success by those of Succoth and Penuel (8:4-9) and the quick attribution of Gideon's victories to Gideon in 8:22, where the people desire Gideon to rule over them.

The next subpoint to this third argument is the interesting element of the Midianite's interpretation of another soldier's dream (Jdg. 7:13-14). No fighting has occurred yet, but the soldier's insight is that God will give the Midianites over to Gideon. How does the soldier know this? Obviously, God has revealed to this foreigner something about the times (an interaction that might only be expected from the God Jesus reveals instead of some tribal god). This gives rise to the question of how divine revelation and inspiration work. Did the interpretation of the dream and the information

about the deliverance of the Midianite army into the hand of Gideon come from nowhere, out of context, out of movements of history, separated from all human experience?

While this question is far outside the scope of this research, a short answer must be given. It is understood that divine revelation and inspiration is not separated from human experience, but guides and directs *interpretations* of what is going on. The Midianite soldier knows that God is at work and this opposing army that is coming will defeat them. It might be speculated that this Midianite has heard of Gideon before and knows him as a mighty warrior before this event. God directs the soldier's attention to understanding the sign of the times – this mighty warrior will now be given victory. The soldier could have heard of Gideon being a warrior around the period of the battle at Tabor or from those who were present at the battle, where Gideon may have been fighting at, where he may have seen his brothers killed in action during a period where the Midianites hand prevailed over Israel. This again is speculation but should be placed as another stone laying the foundation for the argument.

Fourth, to continue to argue that Gideon has previous military experience and exploits during the earlier Midianite oppression, it is commonly recognized that the root of Gideon's name means "to hew" or "to hack." Without entering the discussion about which name, Gideon or Jerubbaal, is his birth name and which one is his nickname, it seems possible that both of his names have significance in his life for his personality and purpose. If it is the case that Gideon's name was his nickname (see cited article for detailed argument), it seems a plausible explanation he earned this name through deeds of war, at least in the context of Judges 6-8.²⁷

²⁷ Josiah Derby, "Gideon or Jerubbaal," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (July 2003): 181-185, accessed February 17, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

Fifth, it should be noted that when Gideon sets out with his three hundred to chase Zebah and Zalmunna, he acts in his own strength, both for planning and for fighting (Jdg. 8). This is often noted in contemporary scholarly literature, one random example being Olson, Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary.²⁸ It could be argued that God trained Gideon through the events of war in Judges 7, or that the Lord enhanced Gideon with supernatural fighting ability. As a response, it should simply be noted that the timeframe of events in Judges 7 seem constrained, with little time for a hero of war to be trained, although in the realm of speculation, it is possible. A more plausible speculation is that Gideon was already a trained warrior but needed God's hand to give the desired results from his abilities.

These five arguments taken together should open the door for the strong possibility that Gideon was already a great warrior, one who lost battles because Israel was handed over to Midian, not because of Gideon's lack of battle prowess (Jdg. 6:1-2). The Lord chose Gideon, at least in part, for his natural, God-given abilities as a warrior. While making no mention of the above arguments, Bowman agrees with this conclusion and summarizes it well by stating, "However, the angel's original salutation, 'mighty warrior,' suggests that the basis of success actually resides in human abilities."²⁹

This long discussion is central and important for finding evidence of Gideon's low self-worth. Primarily, if the angel of the Lord's greeting is a description instead of a prescription, then self-criticism and self-rejection will both be found in Gideon's initial resistance and rejection of his call.

²⁸ Dennis T. Olson, "The Book of Judges," *New Interpreters Bible*, 12 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 795.

²⁹ Bowman, "Narrative Criticism," 37.

There is another possible element to the Lord choosing Gideon as deliverer beyond his abilities as a warrior. Given that the Lord is fully revealed in Jesus, it is not outside of God's love to select someone with a dual purpose in mind: the Lord selects Gideon not just for his ability as a warrior, but because the Lord wants to heal Gideon from deep wounds that have greatly injured his faith in the Lord.

One argument in favor of this is to note that the idea of the ground being holy (present in Moses' call, Ex. 3:4-6), and any need for cleansing rituals are dismissed in the Lord's encounter with Gideon. If this is true, it may suggest the accessibility of the Lord to Gideon, and therefore Israel, to compensate for the wounds of low self-worth: Gideon (and by extension, Israel), is worth enough to God that he does not insist upon his rightful position and the needed rituals, but instead he is directly accessible at this time. Although he may feel rejected (a sign of low self-worth), the Lord has not given up on them.

Gideon's Experience of Communal Rejection (6:13)

Gideon's response to the angel of the Lord is open to interpretation, represented by the many descriptions of Gideon's response. Block takes a strong stance by describing Gideon's response to the angel of the Lord as "cheeky" with a "sarcastic focus on the theological incongruity."³⁰ Webb uses a form of the same word "cheeky" to also describe Gideon's response.³¹ Butler states Block is too strong, but does not fully

³⁰ Block, *Judges*, 260.

³¹ Webb, *Judges*, 230.

disagree with Block either, or offer his own interpretation.³² Sasson increases the venom in Gideon's response by describing it as volcanic, "betraying the frustration and bitterness of living under constant threat."³³

These interpretations have validity and support the argument of Gideon's low self-worth by uncovering hidden anger. Several other aspects of Gideon's response reveal his low self-worth. These include a desperate, depressed response filled with doubting question: "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? Where are his wonderful deeds?" (Jdg. 6:13). These are not a man's response to irony, although the reaction of resentment may still have been produced (against Amit).³⁴ Schneider mistakenly calls Gideon arrogant for asking where all the wonderful deeds were, missing the desperation and depression that would naturally occur in the middle of an oppressed country with little food.³⁵ It is also the response of a man feeling rejected, perhaps even to the point of rejecting one's self, one of the signs of low self-worth.

Second, Gideon reveals that he is not able to accept the compliments given, which is another sign of low self-worth. Assuming the Lord was not insulting Gideon or giving an ironic greeting, Gideon is deflecting both compliments: he ignores and does not receive the second (mighty warrior), and he rejects and doubts the first (the Lord is with you).

Third, as is commonly noted, Gideon, while deflecting the compliment "the LORD is with you," changes what was spoken (singular "you") to the plural, questioning

³² Butler, *Judges*, 202.

³³ Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, 331.

³⁴ Amit, *Art of Editing*, 252.

³⁵ Tammi J. Schneider, *Berit Olam: Judges* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 104.

God's presence with his whole people. This is another sign of low self-worth: poor listening. However, on a positive characterization, it reflects Gideon's concern for "us," his people, who is also God's people. This will be important for interpreting the next verse.

Another possible sign of low self-worth is Gideon's sensitivity. If Gideon perceived irony in the angel's greeting, as Amit suggests, and Gideon responds with anger and sarcasm, it would point again to low self-worth. An important statement must be made here. The spoken word and perceived understanding of that word can be very different. The messenger of the Lord is speaking truth about reality to Gideon; Gideon may receive those words as irony or insult because of his experiences and wounds throughout his life. If it is possible that Gideon is a great warrior who failed in at least one battle where his brothers died, and he lived by retreating, then of course Gideon would be insulted and feel angry because he would reject himself as a great warrior. It must be remembered that experiences of defeat and failure can cause low self-worth.³⁶ Therefore, just because Gideon responds to the messenger of the Lord with a possibly angry retort, it does not mean that the messenger was intentionally looking to provoke Gideon or was not speaking the truth about Gideon.

Finally, it must be noted the faulty theological thinking expressed in the question that Gideon asks God because faulty theological thinking can cause low self-worth.³⁷ There are two parts to this final point. First, Gideon asks why recent events have occurred and where God was, even though the prophet has answered these questions for

³⁶ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 430.

³⁷ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 429.

the Israelites (Jdg. 6:8-10). Second, Gideon believes the Lord has indeed rejected him and Israel because of being handed to the Midianites, which does not reflect reality accurately, especially when the covenant between God and Israel is explored, and Gideon's experienced knowledge of idolatry since his father has a Baal idol (Jdg. 6:25-28).

Conclusions: Outcomes of Gideon's Confrontation with God (Jdg. 6:14-8:35)

So far, it has been shown that Gideon's character most likely suffers from low self-worth. This has been established from multiple angles, including Gideon's background, current actions which reveal signs of low self-worth, and the statements he makes. The possible, tenable suggestion has been made that Gideon was chosen as judge not just to be God's deliverer, but to be given the chance to be healed by the Lord's presence and actions in his life. Now, attention must be turned to the fruit of the Lord's presence with Gideon to see if Gideon is healed of his low self-worth or to find ramifications of his continued low self-worth through his remaining time as judge of Israel. Selected parts of Gideon's story will quickly be analyzed to find either healing or continued effects of woundedness.

First, Gideon steps out in obedience to God's direct, spoken instructions to him by cutting down his father's Baal altar and by sacrificing his father's best bull (Jdg. 6:25-27). However, he does so at night, because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople. This fear shows continued signs of low self-worth, particularly as he is afraid of angering others and attracting attention; therefore, he did the action at night. Gideon also displays some aspect of healing by asserting himself to gather servants and

perform the deed, as opposed to being submissive or dependent on others to lead. In this passage, therefore, it is seen that there is some healing that took place through God's directive to Gideon to perform a certain task. It is rather marvelous that someone as wounded as Gideon mustered the courage to perform this task at all, even if it was at night.

During the following scene Joash defends his son through a clever argument regarding Baal defending himself (6:31-32). The fact that Gideon does not actually defend himself is not an indicator of low self-worth or dependence on his father in this instance. If Joash had already lost two sons to war, as previously argued, then it makes perfect sense for Joash to defend his son, regardless of the personal cost to himself.

Next, Gideon is "clothed" with the spirit of the Lord and he sets out to lead the people against the Midianites and Amalekites (Jdg. 6:33-35). While working in conjunction with Gideon, some healing is shown by the fact that he chooses to lead as the Spirit directed him. Yet, another question and request for assurance comes, reflecting continued self-doubt and low faith at work (Jdg. 6:36-40). God continues to work with Gideon, gently leading him to be healed and supported in this time.

Gideon acts upon this healing in the next scene (Jdg. 7:1-24). He follows God's plan of dismantling his army down to three hundred soldiers. He continues to show a certain level of healing when he formulates a creative plan for defeating the Midianites (7:16-18). It is to be remembered that lack of creativity is one of the signs of low self-worth, so creativity shows signs of healing.

Later, an incident with the Ephraimites takes place in which they "upbraid him [Gideon] violently" (Jdg. 8:1 NRSV). Gideon replies in a way that is diplomatic, but not

for the reason many contemporary scholars give. For example, contrary to Block who says "...at his best Gideon is an extremely sensitive and effective diplomat," what is to be found is a re-wounding of Gideon, where he responds by expressing self-criticism and submission.³⁸ He feels deep anger against others but refuses to show it (8:2-3). This interpretation flows if Gideon truly has low self-worth and his character remains fairly consistent in responding in line with this wounding. After this incident, there is no healing incident with God, nor any further mention of the Lord appearing or speaking to Gideon. Instead, it is seen that Gideon acts on his own.

This is not good. A wounded, hyper-sensitive Gideon who has tasted healing from low self-worth is now left on his own and becomes driven to gain power and control over others, especially those who wound or have wounded him. This plays out in the terrible, dramatic scenes with the people of Succoth and Peniel refusing to aid Gideon and Gideon's subsequent revenge (Jdg. 8:4-9, 13-17). Although Gideon continues to assert himself in creative ways without submitting to another, his drive for revenge and low self-worth compound each other, with the result of the public, severe punishment of two cities and the public execution of two kings both driven by a personal desire for revenge.

It can be seen in this above episode the importance of true healing from low self-worth which understands its place before God and need for reliance on God, instead of taking everything into one's own hands. This also re-emphasizes the important, albeit small, distinction between self-esteem and self-worth.

³⁸ Block, *Judges*, 286.

In the end, Gideon's low self-worth leaves Gideon and all of Israel in a worse place than they were before Gideon began his time as judge. For all practical purposes, Gideon becomes like a king (regardless of Gideon's attempt at piety in Jdg. 8:22).³⁹ He sponsors the making of an ephod, leading Israel into idolatry during his own day (8:24-27). Again, Gideon is seeking to please people, attempting to avoid the possibility of an angry response from the crowd and submitting to their desire in some way. He is also looking to make things happen on his own instead of relying on the Lord. The old wound of low self-worth continues to rear its ugly head.

In the conclusion of Gideon's narrative, low self-worth is found to continually plague Gideon, driving him to awful deeds and leading his people into worse idolatry than when they began. Gideon lost the ability to hear (or ignored) the voice of the Lord, as seen by the Lord's absence in Judges 8. While offered the beginnings of a road that may have healed his low self-worth, Gideon's wounds reopened to cause more harm. Low self-worth clearly has severe effects.

Gideon's Story Informs the Implemented Curriculum

After exegeting the Gideon story, particularly analyzing the character of Gideon for evidence of low self-worth and interpreting God's appearance to Gideon as an offer to heal him from his low self-worth, it is time to turn toward particular learnings that were lifted from this exegesis which informed the implemented curriculum about raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. There are five substantial learnings that can be found.

³⁹ Block, *Judges*, 299-300.

First, the link between trauma and low self-worth is documented in the fifth chapter. Since there is a plausible link between trauma and low self-worth, the implemented curriculum must include a section on forgiveness in order to position someone for healing from low self-worth. Receiving and or giving forgiveness will assist in healing from defeats, failures, guilt, and shame, and from a desire for revenge, which Gideon surely expresses in Judges the eighth chapter. Chapter four will go into more details about forgiveness.

Along with forgiveness, a second part of the above link in raising awareness of low self-worth is to be sensitive in considering the background of the community or person. In considering the background, special attention and care must be given to any defeats, failures, or situations that caused harm.⁴⁰ These are essential to determine the cause(s) of low self-worth. Similarly, causes of Gideon's low self-worth were identified through careful analysis of Gideon's background. Gideon's story also revealed significant signs of low self-worth when scrutinized. All of this may mean that referrals to professional counseling, to go along with pastoral counseling, could be needed for deeper healing after the project period.

Second, the effects of low self-worth on someone's life and vocation can be severe. In the short passage fully exegeted, Gideon is found to be functioning below his station and potential by threshing wheat with the interpreted purpose of being alone away from others due to self-rejection (Jdg. 6:11). Expanding outwards, Gideon doubts God's call and resists his mission (6:15). Gideon's low self-worth causes him to be deeply wounded by the Ephraimites criticism, flowing into the severe punishment of two

⁴⁰ Matt Lewis, interview by author, October 2018.

Israelite cities and the revenge killing of two kings (Jdg. 8). In the end, Gideon leads his people astray, showing that his low self-worth affects not just himself, but the people he leads (Jdg. 9). The same could happen within a pastor and congregation relationship or within someone's personal life.

The foundational element taken is an understanding of the severity of low self-worth. These wounds have significant and lasting impacts on one's self, relationship to others, and even the mission or call of God on one's life. Healing from low self-worth is not just about patting one's self or someone else on the back to make them feel good. Instead, these wounds can severely harm one's self and others. On the flipside of the coin, healing from these wounds will dramatically impact one's life and relationship with others positively.

Third, one biblical model for self-worth can be lifted from Gideon in Judges 6:11-13 and 25-32, specifically dealing with Gideon's faulty theological thinking, which can cause low self-worth as previously noted. Gideon is one who does not understand the work of the Lord and is one who is most likely involved at some level with the family Baal worship before he cut down the altar (Jdg. 6:13, 28). Jeremiah 2:5 drives home the connection "Thus says the LORD: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things and became worthless themselves?" This verse could even extend to "false gods demanding false versions of self-worth from their adherents. Whereas God reflected in Jesus calls his followers 'friends,' the false gods subjugate their followers in a manner that perpetuates worthlessness."⁴¹ It is also noted in the Gideon Cycle throughout this chapter that as Gideon obeyed the Lord and

⁴¹ Matthew Fullen, interview by author, November 2018.

walked with him, he received some measure of healing from low self-worth. As events progressed and new offenses happened, Gideon stopped communicating to the Lord and went off on his own path of revenge against everyone (Jdg. 8).

The foundational learning here is central and crucial to raising awareness about low self-worth: what people “go” after, i.e. their “vision” for themselves and life, determines their worth. This can be cyclical, as someone’s worth may also influence what they think they deserve and “go” after.⁴² If people go after worthless things, such as idols or revenge, then people will experience low self-worth to the point of becoming “worthless.” If people go after the Lord, they will experience worth that comes from the Lord. This was drawn out further in the curriculum by didactic teaching on John 1:12-13 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, which respectively state “But to all who receive him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God,” and “All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” Chapter two will expand on this idea in the conceptualized model for being positioned for healing through “vision.”

It must be mentioned that going after the Lord is not always an easy task or path. There must be a deep and abiding patience with self (if one is on the healing journey) or with others because the healing from deep wounds can be very hard. Some individuals may need time and space to doubt God, ask hard questions, have time to receive and process answers, and re-engage as necessary. The pastor and church, i.e. the community,

⁴² Matthew Fullen, interview by author, November 2018.

can be a safe space for this to occur, if they have the awareness to see what is happening.⁴³ Chapter four will give more details on community.

Fourth, it can be seen from a certain interpretation of Judges 6:11-13 that God desires to heal wounds of low self-worth. Gideon was chosen not just for his natural abilities but because God wanted to work in his life to move him toward healing. His deep patience with Gideon is a testimony to this as God graciously does more than what Gideon's first sign asks for, even assuring Gideon at the end to allay his fears (Jdg. 6:18-24). God then gives Gideon a first, small step towards healing and continues to use him, even when Gideon does not respond with the most courageous method of leadership (Jdg. 6:25-27). Even after clothing Gideon with his presence, God graciously responds to another sign for Gideon and encourages Gideon greatly on his mission (Jdg. 6:36-40; 7:9-14).

Therefore, a foundational part of the implemented curriculum was creating an emphasis that God indeed has healing available for communities and individuals from wounds of low self-worth. One aspect of this is God's presence, just as God met with Gideon. Another possible way this occurs is through offering a call and or mission to a community or person that fits their talents. Healing from low self-worth may occur as one steps out in obedience to the task God calls them to. Lastly, as one relies on God, one will find him willing to respond to doubts and questions that flow from low self-worth, perhaps in a different manner than Gideon but with the same grace and love.

The final learning from the Gideon narrative is that healing from low self-worth is not an act of selfishness. Healing is meant to make people better conduits of God's will

⁴³ Shawn Oliver, interview by author, November 2018.

and purposes. Gideon was not offered healing from low self-worth only so he could take his proper station in Joash's household. Gideon was offered healing so he could lead God's people by being God's chosen deliverer for them and bring the people into repentance and deeper relationship with the Lord so that a time of peace and prosperity might occur.

This is important for raising awareness of low self-worth, especially for those who experience it. Healing does not happen just so good feelings can flow through self and the church community. Instead, healing is offered so that individuals and churches can become conduits of God's grace, love, and will to and for others. This again moves back to the idea of community, which is further explored in chapter four.

These five foundational elements were lifted from the exegesis and interpretation of Judges 6:11-13 and its surrounding context. They became part of the implemented curriculum.

Conclusion

The exploration of Gideon's narrative, in particular Judges 6:11-13, was extremely helpful in offering part of the implemented curriculum. Other chapters explore ideas that have been discovered here in more detail. Carefully establishing and working through signs of low self-worth in Gideon were especially crucial for interpreting the rest of the narrative and God's purposes and work in and through Gideon. A strong case that Gideon indeed suffered from low self-worth has been made. Low self-worth impacted himself and others in dramatic ways. Another person possibly affected by low self-worth

is John Woolman in his childhood years. However, Woolman also offers a methodology for being positioned for healing by the love of God as well.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

John Woolman provides a distinctive contrast to Gideon in leadership and legacy because of his healing from low self-worth. Woolman's intimate relationship with God provides a depth of self-worth that overflows into a tenderness and love towards other humans and creatures. This love was used by God in a powerful ministry to others, resulting in the Friends (Quakers) being persuaded of the evil of slavery and making slave-owning a disown-able offense approximately one hundred years before the United States government abolished slavery. John Woolman's legacy extends beyond this through his writings.

Introduction

The purpose of analyzing John Woolman's life is to identify a methodology for healing from low self-worth and to provide a substantive vision of what healing from low self-worth looks like and results in, specifically humility. This purpose is part of raising awareness of low self-worth, namely, how to heal from low self-worth by being positioned for healing by God's love. It is also argued that John Woolman suffered from low self-worth as a child and received healing from this wound early in his life. A link between low self-worth, guilt, and shame is also uncovered. This chapter is limited in its scope of analysis to Woolman's childhood years, specifically birth to around the age

twenty-one. This period is a crucial time of transition for Woolman, where both the wound of low self-worth can be identified and the method for healing from low self-worth discovered. It should be known up front that it is unlikely Woolman knew he was experiencing low self-worth and unlikely he took direct action against it. However, he did experience low self-worth and his life does show a method for healing, even if Woolman fell into it, both of which are detailed below. The methodology for healing, vision, intention, means (VIM), is explained using Woolman's life.

This analysis begins with a brief description of the larger historical context in which John Woolman lived. A word on the primary source used for this chapter leads into an analysis of John Woolman's childhood to identify the wound of low self-worth and how he was healed from it. Results of his healing are then detailed. Finally, a practical application relating these things to the project is given in two parts. One part explores a possible method of healing from low self-worth through experiencing the love of God. The second part states that John Woolman's life could operate as a possible vision of healing for those experiencing low self-worth.

Historical Context

John Woolman is a saintly name and figure found in the margins of United States history. John Woolman was born in 1720 and died in 1772, which was a time of upheaval and turbulence in the English colonies in America. His life coincides with memorable great names, such as Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), George Washington

(1732-1799), John Wesley (1703-1791), Jonathan Edwards (1704-1758), David Hume, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, and a host of others.¹

In the 1700's, the United States was not yet formed. It existed as colonial territories under the jurisdiction of the British Empire. "American" soil was being purchased from the Native Americans through various schemes and tactics. France extended its fingers into what is now the Mid-West of the United States. Tensions ran high between the French and English, with Native Americans caught on both sides. The result was the French and Indian war, which began in 1754 and ended in 1763.

Narrowing down from these large-scale events, one finds a pacifist religious group of which Woolman is nearly considered an ideal member. The name "Quaker" was given to those who were a part of the religious organization named the "Society of Friends" because they tended to shake and tremble when they stood up to deliver a word from the Lord.

The Society of Friends was founded in seventeenth century England by George Fox and his followers. Similar in a few ways to the Anabaptists (who developed in Germany and Switzerland) in the Radical Reformation, Fox and Friends took the Reformation to its logical end, at least in their eyes. They had no creeds, no set liturgy for worship, and no sacraments (not even Baptism or Communion) because they believed these were outward forms without any true substance. What mattered, they said, was the true inner substance of these things which cultivated faith and life in Jesus Christ.²

¹ Sterling P. Olmsted and Mike Heller, eds., *John Woolman: A Nonviolence and Social Change Source Book*, 2nd ed. (Wilmington, OH: Wilmington College Peace Resource Center, 2013), xxvii-xxxii.

² David Sox, *John Woolman: Quintessential Quaker, 1720-1772* (Richmond, IN: Friends United, 1999), 5.

Friends also held that all humans were equal, so that each person had direct access to God through the Spirit that resided in everyone. To display this equality, everyone was simply called “Friend” without any structured authority among them (although some Friends were considered ‘weightier’ than others). This belief in equality led them to pacifism, set up an un-easiness with slavery from the start, and made a simple life possible and accessible. Friends also had women ministers, which was uncommon in that era. John Woolman was affected by this sense of equality and value for every human throughout his life and development.

Ministers among Friends always rose from the local fellowship (called “Meetings”) they participated in. Generally, ministers were those who were approved by a local meeting to be dedicated to the work of the Lord and who received words from the Lord more often than others. This did not elevate a single person above others in the fellowship but was an acknowledgment of how the Spirit was moving during the meeting.

Primary Source: John Woolman’s Journal

A note must be made regarding the primary source for this chapter, which is John Woolman’s *Journal*. This source falls into the genre of religious autobiography. Friend Journals have a niche within this genre. They are intentionally shaped by the author to record the main events in life in which they encountered the Divine, whether through a direct experience or by being shaped by said event.³ Woolman’s *Journal* is no exception. It is shaped by Woolman to exclude many details of daily life (such as his relationship with his wife and daughter) that a casual reader may desire and expect from an

³ Olmstead and Heller, *Source Book*, 5.

autobiography. Gummere states the *Journal* “...contains but a thread of personal history, usually introduced because it is necessary to explain the circumstances of the spiritual ‘exercise’ which he wishes to record.”⁴

John Woolman is such a beloved Friend, and his *Journal* so valuable to so many, that many reprint editions and edits of the *Journal* have been published. The original publication of Woolman’s *Journal* took place after his death by the editing committee of the publishing house the Friends owned. In subsequent reprintings in the twentieth century, revisions by these editors were reinserted into the *Journal*. The “authorative” edition of the *Journal* in John Woolman studies is currently Moulton’s edition (1971). For this chapter, two other editions of the *Journal* with important and valuable biographical introductions were consulted, namely Gummere’s edition (1922) and Whittier’s edition (1871). All citations and quotes from the *Journal* will be from Moulton’s edition unless otherwise specified in the footnote.

Critique of Current John Woolman Scholarship

Current scholarly analyses of John Woolman’s life miss some deep insights and graces given to Woolman because scholars are too gracious toward him. Generally, in examinations of Woolman’s life, the worst thing said about him was that he could be critical, especially towards himself and possibly towards others, on occasion.⁵ It is difficult to be critical in one’s analysis toward Woolman, as he has many

⁴ John Woolman, *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman. Edited from the Original Manuscripts with a Biographical Introduction by Amelia Mott Gummere*, ed. Amelia Mott Gummere (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1922), ix.

⁵ Geoffrey Gilbert Plank, *John Woolman’s Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2012), 209.

“accolades...mystic *and* activist, prophet and saint, *schöne seele* (beautiful soul), a perfect exemplar of Quaker empiricism.”⁶ It is hard not to agree when examining Woolman within his historical context and after reading his *Journal*. However, the task in this chapter will be to rigorously pry and draw out the severity of Woolman’s wounds from childhood in order to uncover the precious grace God extended to Woolman and the process of healing Woolman experienced.

Signs of Low Self-Worth in Early Childhood

John Woolman was born on October 19th, 1720 on the banks of the Rancocas River near Mount Holly, New Jersey. Born the fourth child and the first son in a religious Friends’ household, he was raised by his father (Samuel) and mother (Elizabeth Burr) with his twelve siblings. The family attended Meetings (church services) weekly, read scripture and spiritual books after Meetings on Sundays, and read scripture aloud together in the evenings. These sorts of activities established the family as a religious one and identified practices that would have been known to John Woolman in his early life that helped him to be healed from low self-worth.

John Woolman’s first encounter with God was recorded in his *Journal* as a “sweetness” that attended his mind when he was on his way home from school and went aside to read Revelation the twenty second chapter.⁷ This was a serious enough occasion to remain on Woolman’s mind when he began to write his journal at the age of thirty-six.

⁶ Sox, *John Woolman*, 2.

⁷ John Woolman, *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 23.

He continues to describe his upbringing through the pious and religious instruction of his parents and the method of life that incorporated scripture and religious reading.

The roots of his low self-worth take shape and appear early as well, though it cannot be proven from his journal that his religious parents wounded him in some way. The Friends' emphasis on the sanctity and equality of every human being led to positive approaches of child rearing, which is a tremendous contrast to the Puritan rod and severe word that might be associated with past generations of Christians in the United States. Friends would have stressed non-violent and non-coercive forms of child rearing.⁸ This is exemplified in Woolman's *Journal* when he relates a story of his father taking him aside and gently chiding him for a disrespectful word given to his mother.⁹ As will be seen, someone who has a healthy upbringing can still suffer from low self-worth based on their perspective of self and circumstance.

The roots of low self-worth are uncovered in the manner of Woolman's perspective, when he makes a judgment from childhood regarding the saintliness of other times and the lack of uprightness in his own time. He writes,

From what I had read and heard, I believed there had been in past ages people who walked in uprightness before God in a degree exceeding any that I knew, or heard of, now living; and the apprehension of there being less steadiness and firmness amongst people in this age than in past ages often troubled me while I was a child.¹⁰

This perspective is critical towards others, which is one sign of low self-worth. There is a general evaluation of humanity in the negative, with a sense that many more individuals

⁸ Sox, *John Woolman*, 10.

⁹ Woolman, *Journal*, 25.

¹⁰ Woolman, *Journal*, 24.

should have been steadier and firmer when compared to people of the past. This contrasts with the generally positive approach the Friends' had to humanity, as stated above. However, it also is a good place to make a note about the ideal in this passage that is important later in this analysis. It occurs to Woolman that there is a way of walking with God, a life of righteousness, that exceeds what he has encountered in his life up to this point. This ideal will become important in later discussions around Woolman's sense of shame and low self-worth.

The second sign of low self-worth is documented closely after this judgment in the *Journal*. It details the account of a young John Woolman seeing a mother robin fearfully flying away at Woolman's approach but fluttering back with loud cries because of her concern for her young in a nearby nest. He began throwing stones at this mother robin; one hit and killed her. Initially pleased, he was then struck with a sense of horror concerning his action and the fate of the young robins. He ended up killing all the young robins to show them mercy.¹¹

In response to this event, Woolman records he could not think of anything else but these cruel actions for several hours. This event greatly troubled him and seems to be traumatic enough that it was etched into his mind so that when he records it at the age of thirty-six, it is recorded with detail. While it is unknown whether he was hard on himself after this incident, future incidents and judgments seem to lean in the direction that this event set up a series of events in which Woolman was critical of himself, which is another sign of low self-worth.

¹¹ Woolman, *Journal*, 24-25.

The third sign of low self-worth is revealed in further events in his childhood, which revealed a critical sense of self, at least when he was experiencing those events. The inner critic is a noted feature of low self-worth.¹² Woolman describes a period of his history where he loved “wanton company” and though he was “preserved from profane language or scandalous conduct” he considered himself “hastened toward destruction” and wept as he reflected on his youthful disobedience.¹³ While Woolman does not specify what sins he may have committed, there is a general agreement among his biographers that, with the excluding from his sin profane language and scandalous conduct, that his conduct was probably tied to card playing, joking around, and other forms of what we might now consider ‘horse play.’

Thomas Clarkson, an abolitionist and co-worker with the Friends, wrote in 1806 the arguments Friends used as to why horse play and card playing was frowned upon and even prohibited. This authority can be used because it is close to the time of Woolman. Clarkson notes three such arguments: first, it was below the dignity of the intellect, moral, and Christian character of a human being; second, it excites the emotions and desires of a person to the extent that it effects the mind; and third, it could produce habits of gaming which, when formed, could “ruin the moral character.”¹⁴

¹² Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning, *Self-Esteem: A Proven Program of Cognitive Techniques for Assessing, Improving, and Maintaining Your Self-Esteem*, 4th ed. (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2016), 7-24.

¹³ Woolman, *Journal*, 25.

¹⁴ Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism Taken from a View of the Education and Discipline, Social Manners, Civil and Political Economy, Religious Principles and Character of the Society of Friends*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Samuel Stansbury, 1806), 35-58, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k618777/f4.image>.

With this understanding of the Friends' perspective on horseplay and card-playing, it can be suggested that Woolman suffered from guilt and shame because he believed he did not live up to his and his parents' common expectations and cultural standards and Woolman's own ideal of how to live. In order to understand this fully, definitions are given for guilt and shame, including an explanation on how guilt and shame might affect self-worth, followed by a deeper investigation into guilt and shame in this period of Woolman's life.

Guilt results from a person's actions (wrongdoing), usually something like the "transgression of boundaries."¹⁵ Shame results from falling short of one's ideals and specifically questions one's own being (wrong being).¹⁶ Different fears arise from guilt than shame. Guilt fears punishment, while shame fears abandonment because if one fails "to live up to an ideal and be seen as deficient...I will show myself to be unlovable."¹⁷ Shame is, in this sense defined above, relational, resulting in estrangement and or isolation.¹⁸

The suggestion is that guilt can be part of low self-worth, but shame is a bedfellow to low self-worth. It seems that guilt can play into or relate to a sign of low self-worth in that a person might be angry at themselves for their actions or might feel too

¹⁵ Brad A. Binau, "When Shame is the Question, How Does the Atonement Answer?" *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12, no. 1 (January 2002): 94, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.

¹⁶ Binau, "When Shame is the Question," 94, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.

¹⁷ Binau, "When Shame is the Question," 94, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸ Binau, "When Shame is the Question," 97, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.

weak to overcome habitual actions that transgress boundaries. Collins, a licensed clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Purdue University, defines two types of guilt: objective guilt and subjective guilt. Under objective guilt, he lists four sub-types, one of which is social guilt, which “comes when we break an unwritten but socially accepted rule.”¹⁹ The above description of the Friends’ view of horseplay is enough to establish an unwritten socially accepted rule regarding horseplay, in which it follows that Woolman may have experienced social guilt.

A second type of guilt described by Collins is subjective guilt, which is the

uncomfortable feeling of regret, remorse, shame, and self-condemnation that often comes when we have done or thought something we feel is wrong, or failed to do something that should have been done. Often there is discouragement, anxiety, fear of punishment or rejection, self-condemnation, and a sense of isolation, all tied together as part of the guilt feeling...Subjective guilt feelings can be appropriate or inappropriate. Appropriate guilt feelings are present when we have broken a law, disobeyed biblical teachings, or violated the dictates of our conscience and feel remorse in proportion to the seriousness of our actions. Inappropriate guilt feelings are out of proportion to the seriousness of the act.²⁰

Woolman experiences subjective, inappropriate guilt (which will be shown below), which can lead to feelings of shame and low self-worth.²¹ Appropriate and inappropriate guilt feelings are explored a further in chapter five.

Shame impacts self-worth by its definition, since shame is a self-measurement that finds one lacking, naturally assigning self a negative value. Since the primary fear of shame is abandonment due to being deficient, it relates directly to one of the signs of low self-worth, which is “feeling isolated and unlovable.”²² Guilt feelings can also impact

¹⁹ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 178.

²⁰ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 179.

²¹ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 179.

²² Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 433.

self-worth through arousing “anxiety and self-condemning feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, weakness, low esteem, pessimism and insecurity.”²³ The self-condemnation piece can especially be seen in Woolman’s critique of himself.

Woolman records in his *Journal* several poignant remarks indicating that he feels guilt and shame. Just before recounting his teenage years of frivolous play, he notes a story about his father advising him to be more careful in the future with his replies to his mother since Woolman had made an undutiful reply to her. Woolman writes, “I knew myself blameable, and in shame and confusion remained silent.”²⁴ Here it is seen that Woolman felt a sense of shame (that something was wrong with his person) because of what he had done. He perceived his actions as a reflection that something was wrong with his being. This experience of shame reflects his low self-worth.

Shame, and therefore low self-worth, continues to impact John Woolman in his teenage years. When recounting his teenage years of wanton company, he notes that when he was “brought seriously to consider my ways, and the sight of my backsliding affected me with sorrow.”²⁵ He felt “estranged” from Scripture and “heavenly things.”²⁶ These are serious notes to consider, first because Woolman experienced subjective guilt for his actions. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it can lead to repentance. Shame, however, affects self-worth, which in this case is an overreaction to the experience of guilt.

²³ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 185.

²⁴ Woolman, *Journal*, 25.

²⁵ Woolman, *Journal*, 25.

²⁶ Woolman, *Journal*, 25.

A second subpoint here is the focus on John Woolman's ideal and its relation to his low self-worth. The process of thinking that he had backslidden indicates that there was some sort of ideal (note Woolman's childhood critique of humanity above) that he was not advancing towards but sliding away from. This formation of an ideal, and not living up to it, is a part of guilt and shame. Collins lists as one of the causes of guilt as "unrealistic expectations," which is similar in concept to an ideal, though how unrealistic Woolman's ideal was is yet to be determined.²⁷

As a third subpoint, it can be seen in the above quotation from his teenage years that Woolman feels a sense of relational strain and isolation between himself and the tools by which he encountered God and God himself. This seems to be a product of experiencing shame which relates to low self-worth, recalling that one sign of low self-worth is a feeling of isolation.

Woolman experiences a devastating sickness next, which he interprets as a part of a chastising or correcting by the Lord. He notes that he "bewailed himself," indicating that he was grieving his own person.²⁸ Woolman was not just grieving his folly, but as he notes, "himself." Woolman lapses back in with his friends after this incident, but, coming home one night, he opens a Bible near his window and the first thing he saw was, "'We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us [Jer. 3:25].' This I knew to be my case...I was somewhat affected with it and went to bed under remorse of conscience."²⁹ Again, what is seen is Woolman experiencing shame around his person,

²⁷ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 181, 431.

²⁸ Woolman, *Journal*, 26.

²⁹ Woolman, *Journal*, 27.

and most likely guilt around his actions as well. If Woolman is experiencing shame, then as previously connected, Woolman is experiencing low self-worth, at least in part.

Sox, a biographer of Woolman, writes, “In our day psychologists would probably say that such a dutiful boy was being unduly hard on himself.”³⁰ Human development experts suggest that breaking rules can be a normal feature of the teenage years.³¹ It seems that Woolman was critical of himself, even expressing rejection of himself during these teenage years of “rebellion,” if it can be called that. As a summary, this stems from his vision of an ideal of being a person who walked in uprightness before God. Not living up to or into this ideal produced both guilt (social and subjective) and shame in Woolman. Woolman’s perspective of not living up to his ideal, colored by his already existent low self-worth, further impacted his low self-worth.

Changes that Lead to Healing in Woolman

After vacillating between following God and his rebellion, he eventually came to a place of encountering God’s judgment and “was often sad and longed to be delivered from those vanities.”³² During some spiritual reading one evening, Woolman humbly prayed and “felt refreshment to come from his presence,” leading him after some time to withdraw from his young friends, which continued later into life when he continued to isolate himself from his acquaintances after work.³³

³⁰ Sox, *John Woolman*, 10.

³¹ Jean Illsley Clark and Connie Dawson, *Growing Up Again: Parenting Ourselves, Parenting our Children*, 2nd ed. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing, 1998), 230, 234.

³² Woolman, *Journal*, 27.

³³ Woolman, *Journal*, 27-28, 30.

Woolman's life change had two steps that can be seen. First, Woolman withdrew from people and cut himself off from his friends because of shame and guilt over what he considered futile actions. This is neither good nor bad. It does show a sense of self-worth because Woolman decides to take steps to become the sort of person who lives out the ideals he believes in. He does this not primarily by his own strength, but by seeking the help of God.³⁴ Seeking God is the second step in Woolman's life that led to healing.

It must be noted here that Woolman is suffering from low self-worth, not appropriate contrition. His motivation is rooted in subjective inappropriate guilt and shame instead of subjective appropriate guilt. It must be recalled that Woolman was experiencing objective social guilt for horseplay. These social rules are not explicitly God's law, and therefore the guilt associated with them is not necessarily appropriate. Woolman's subjective guilt from the objective social guilt was experienced inappropriately because it led to shame. It did lead Woolman to seeking God, but he did so while suffering from low self-worth.

Someone with a healthy sense of self-worth may have experienced social guilt for horseplay, and subjective appropriate guilt. If this was experienced, one could have reflected on priorities: which is more important, horseplay or time with God? Action steps could have then been taken to move closer to God without the need for low self-worth or subjective inappropriate guilt leading to shame. Healthy self-worth may also not have taken such a radical step to sever relationships with friends, but instead set needed boundaries to attend to first priorities without the severing of relationships.

³⁴ Woolman, *Journal*, 27-29.

A Methodology for Healing from Low Self-Worth Found in Woolman

At this point, a methodology for experiencing healing from low self-worth can be explored. As a helpful dialogue partner, Dallas Willard, deceased Philosophy Professor at USC and author of numerous Christian formation books, will be used to assist. Willard writes about a general pattern for human accomplishment and change which occurs in a person by the grace of God. He articulates three steps, or components, for change: vision, intention, and means (VIM).³⁵ A vision is a goal, a picture of life, and or an understanding of life that can be moved into and lived out. Willard explains the vision as life in the Kingdom of God.³⁶ Intention is defined as deciding to do it.³⁷ Means are the ways, resources, and tools that can be used to carry out the vision.³⁸ This pattern can be identified in Woolman's life at the point of change moving from his life of wantonness into a profound life with God, from his life of low self-worth into healing. It must be stated that Woolman does not go about the method described by Willard on purpose but falls into it because of his upbringing and religious culture. Yet, this pattern can still be identified and utilized for methodology in this chapter.

The first step is "vision," which is the ideal picture of life operating in Woolman. While not living up to this ideal caused guilt and shame with harmful effects in Woolman's life, the ideal also provided the vision for what life could look like as a

³⁵ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, 10th anniversary ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Nave Press, 2002), 85.

³⁶ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 86.

³⁷ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 87.

³⁸ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 89.

faithful servant of God. A piece of this ideal and vision can be extrapolated by what he was sorrowful over and what he desired. Woolman had an ideal that excluded wantonness and included a picture of a life which “faithful servants of God lived in.”³⁹

Woolman’s vision was also inspired by real life models of faith whom he knew in his local community. Woolman writes, “Still I retained a love and esteem for pious people, and their company brought an awe upon me.”⁴⁰ Particulars of this ideal, or how much he dwelt on the ideal are not detailed in the journal. However, the influence of these pious people grounded Woolman’s ideal at this period of his life, creating a change from unrealistic expectations to concrete realities. Included in these models could be his parents, who raised and instructed him in religion as a child and whom he lived with during this period of his life.⁴¹ These models created a sense that he too could live out his ideal. The ideal may have started out as unrealistic expectation but shifted as he grew older because he gained maturity. The ideal also provided internal conflict which caused him to change, without which it is doubtful he would have been challenged to change from his previous way of life.

Second is the “intention,” which is the decision to live out the ideal. Woolman indicates that this intention was cultivated over a series of years in which he made progression toward his ideal then away from his ideal and into wantonness. Woolman writes, “I remember one evening I had spent some time in reading a pious author, and walking out alone I humbly prayed to the Lord for his help, that I might be delivered

³⁹ Woolman, *Journal*, 28.

⁴⁰ Woolman, *Journal*, 26.

⁴¹ Woolman, *Journal*, 29.

from all those vanities which so ensnared me.”⁴² This passage falls within a time frame where there is an oscillation between vanity and wantonness and the life of faith he has a vision for. Therefore, while stating intention is part of the beginning of the process of healing, Woolman is still operating within the framework of low self-worth.

Finally, in combination with determining the parts of the “means” of living into his vision, he made a decision to live out the “means” in order to achieve the “vision.” While convoluted to explain, it makes perfect sense when the passage under analysis in Woolman’s *Journal* is read.

I was now led to look seriously at the means by which I was drawn from the pure Truth, and learned this: that if I would live in the life which the faithful servants of God lived in, I must not go into company as heretofore in my own will, but all the cravings of sense must be governed by a divine principle. In times of sorrow and abasement these instructions were sealed upon me, and I felt the power of Christ prevail over selfish desires, so that I was preserved in a good degree of steadiness. And being young and believing at that time that a single life was best for me, I was strengthened to keep from such company as had often been a snare to me.⁴³

In this passage, Woolman’s first step was to reflect on what was preventing him from achieving the vision of a faithful life that he desired. He saw that it was his companions and their company that prevented him from achieving that end, and so he resolved (read: fully intended) to stay away from them and live a single life for the time being.

Woolman stayed away from his companions for the purpose of and by means of spending time with God, which Woolman describes as “times of sorrow and abasement” so that the power of Christ enabled Woolman to fulfill his intention. The “means,” which

⁴² Woolman, *Journal*, 27.

⁴³ Woolman, *Journal*, 28.

is the third part of Willard's theory of transformation, involve positioning oneself before God in order to receive God's power to be transformed and to move toward the vision.

Woolman utilizes other "means" that were well known to him from childhood in order to cultivate his life with God and move toward the vision of being a faithful servant. Woolman writes, "I kept steady to meetings, spent First Days after noon chiefly in reading the Scriptures and other good books."⁴⁴ These reflect some of the spiritual disciplines that are well known throughout history, such as gathering with other believers, studying scripture and other spiritually good books, and to do so in silence and solitude.⁴⁵

These new patterns of living, the "means," were what assisted John Woolman in becoming the type of person who lived as a faithful servant of God. These same means are those which helped Woolman heal from his wounds of low self-worth, particularly the guilt and shame which he experienced and led to his wounding. Willard's pattern for transformation, "VIM," and the helpful example Woolman provides here, are discussed in the practical application section since it is crucial to understand in order to be healed from low self-worth. One of the evidences of Woolman's healing is the absence of guilt and shame from a great deal of the remainder of the *Journal*, though periods of it persist when Woolman feels he disobeys.

Woolman continued this pattern of living for at least three years and beyond, as he records that at the age of twenty-one, when Woolman became the shopkeeper employed by the owner in the town of Mount Holly, he continued to isolate himself from

⁴⁴ Woolman, *Journal*, 28.

⁴⁵ Woolman, *Journal*, 29.

his acquaintances in the evenings in order to spend time with God, in scripture reading, and in reading pious works.⁴⁶

This time of solitude did not lead Woolman to further withdrawal or isolation but led to a deep intimacy with God and a humble, loving tenderness toward others. In his own words:

And now, as I had experienced the love of God through Jesus Christ to redeem me from many pollutions and to be a succor to me through a sea of conflicts, with which no person was fully acquainted, as my heart was often enlarged in this heavenly principle, I felt a tender compassion for the youth who remained entangled in snares like those which had entangled me. From one month to another this love and tenderness increased, and my mind was more strongly engaged for the good of my fellow creatures.⁴⁷

It seems that one of the signs of low self-worth, withdrawing from others, can be used as a means for healing from low self-worth if it is re-orientated and appropriately directed towards seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Mt 6:33). Withdrawal from others can be turned into a spiritual discipline of solitude if refocused on pursuing God. This can create space for study and intimacy with God.

Results of Healing from Low Self-Worth in Woolman

The healing that takes place when encountering the love of God through Jesus is specific: a tender compassion and love increases in the heart towards others, which is a helpful vision for those suffering from low self-worth to embrace. Woolman says near enough to this when he writes, “From an inward purifying, and steadfast abiding under it,

⁴⁶ Woolman, *Journal*, 30.

⁴⁷ Woolman, *Journal*, 30.

springs a lively operative desire for the good of others.’’⁴⁸ Since Woolman was able to work for the love of others, it follows that he was no longer feeling low self-worth since the direction of his attention shifted from his own guilt and shame (and by extension, low self-worth) to concerning himself with how he was loving others and promoting their good.

One sign of healing is how he documents his traumatic experience about the robin from early in his childhood. When writing about this incident, there are no judgments upon himself, no self-flagellation on his younger self beyond a description of what occurred in the language of Proverbs 12:10 – “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” This shows that instead of remaining critical of himself, Woolman eventually entered a sense of self-worth where he could freely admit his wrongdoing without needing to condemn himself, without being overly critical of himself, and without rejecting himself.

Second, there is a sense that low self-worth is healed when one enters the vision and or ideal that one has for themselves. Woolman’s ideal was to be a faithful servant of God, and as he entered the means of living such a life, was purified, and lived under this purification (see quote above), he began to experience self-worth. Notice too, the purification began inside himself, working its way outward, which reveals that healing from self-worth cannot be contrived from outward things, but must be something that flows from the inside.

Finally, one characterization that every biographer, and many people of his own day, give to John Woolman is tenderness and humility. It is important to remember that

⁴⁸ Woolman, *Journal*, 31.

healthy self-worth is directly linked to the Christian sense of humility, which is the clear, realistic understanding of one's own position in relationship to God, to self, and to others. It neither values oneself lower nor higher than others, recognizing that all stand equally loved by God.

Woolman fulfills humility defined above to the word, both from evidence of his own words and from evidence from others. It is important to take time to show Woolman's humility because by knowing one's place in relationship to God and others, and to others as equals, it necessitates some healing from low self-worth. Humility is opposed to one of the deep signs of low self-worth, which is to be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others. It also provides another piece of the vision for healing that those wounded by low self-worth can use to move toward healing.

Woolman writes of the equality of all humankind, himself included, in a multitude of places in his argument against slavery in *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*. He begins his argument with a discussion of self-love, including the right and wrongful direction of self-love. He utilizes Jesus' teachings in Matthew 12:48cf which states that Jesus' family are those who do the will of the Father in heaven.⁴⁹ This establishes a stable ground for claiming mankind as equal before God in their status, as all those who obey God.

Woolman then moves into a comment on Matthew 6:33 where he writes,

If then the business of mankind in this life is to first seek another, if this cannot be done but by attending to the means, if a summary of the means is not to do that to another which (in like circumstances) we would not have done unto us, then these are points of moment and worthy of our most serious consideration.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ John Woolman, "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 198-199.

⁵⁰ Woolman, "Some Considerations," 199.

He continues the development of this argument when he further writes,

When we remember that all nations are of one blood (Gen. 3:20); that in this world we are but sojourners; that we are subject to the like afflictions and infirmities of body, the like disorders and frailties in mind, the like temptations, the same death and the same judgment; and that the All-wise Being is judge and Lord over us all, it seems to raise an idea of a general brotherhood and a disposition easy to be touched with a feeling of each other's afflictions.⁵¹

This line of argumentation that Woolman writes reflects a natural sense of deep humility, when humility is defined as seeing one's self in relation to God and others, all equally loved by God. He includes himself and all humans in an equal position before God, all of whom are loved by God. Woolman writes, "For God's love is universal, so where the mind is sufficiently influenced by it, it begets a likeness of itself and the heart is enlarged towards all men."⁵²

Other testimonies of Woolman's humility include letters sent between Friends about John Woolman. William Forster, a Friend writing to his cousin Rebecca Haydock in a letter dated August 16, 1772, writes:

The remarkable appearance of your countryman John Woolman who is now with Sarah Morris and her niece in Yorkshire attracts the notice of many. His steady uniform deportment, his meekness and unaffected humility, his solidity, no less in conversation than in his ministry, which is instructing and edifying, creates much esteem and well corresponds with his appearance.⁵³

In another letter to Sally Tuke, a Friend writes, "But he is certainly a very deep minister that searches things quite to the bottom, greatly exercised in a life of self-denial and humility."⁵⁴ Finally, a Friend who knew Woolman well, John Pemberton, wrote to the

⁵¹ Woolman, "Some Considerations," 200.

⁵² Woolman, "Some Considerations," 202.

⁵³ Olmstead and Heller, *Source Book*, 140.

⁵⁴ Olmstead and Heller, *Source Book*, 140.

Friends in London concerning Woolman when Woolman traveled to England, “He is a good minister, a sensible man, and though he may appear singular, yet from a close knowledge of him he will be found to be a man of a sweet clean spirit and preserved from harsh censure of those who do not see and conform as he does.”⁵⁵

It is easy to see the deep love for all of humanity that Woolman has, and for each person he encounters specifically, which can be seen if one studies the rest of his life. In the final phrase of the letter from Pemberton, it is seen that Woolman is released from legalism, not expecting of others what he feels called to himself. It seems that one of the results from having low self-worth and being healed from it is the increase of love and worth one gives to others, derived from Woolman’s humility.

Application to the Implemented Curriculum – Methodology

This chapter now turns to the application that can be extracted from what has been found. First, it must be re-iterated that trauma, no matter how small or large it may seem, may impact one’s sense of self-worth. This was found in Gideon’s life. In John Woolman’s life, an incident with killing a robin and her young was enough to impact him sufficiently to skew his sense of self-worth. This blooms in his harsh opinions of himself as a young man, until the time he has his experiences and encounters with the Lord. This trauma also provides the seed for guilt and shame which greatly impacted Woolman’s sense of self-worth during childhood. Shining light on trauma helped to raise awareness of trauma and its connection to low self-worth in the implemented curriculum. Further work may be necessary in pastoral or professional counseling, whether individually or in

⁵⁵ Olmstead and Heller, *Source Book*, 139.

groups after the project period. Voluntary counseling during the pastoral discussions may be helpful during the project period.

Second, the VIM principle from Willard is an extremely helpful methodology that was discussed in the implemented curriculum. One's ideal (vision) for life plays a crucial role in low self-worth because of the effects of subjective guilt and shame when one does not live into one's own ideal for life. A first step in healing is to root one's vision for life, creating realistic expectations for oneself and letting go of the unrealistic expectations that may have dominated oneself. Helpful here is not dismissing the ideal all together, but re-orientating it around concrete reality to create an ideal (or vision) of life that can truly be entered. Woolman's life can operate as one such concrete reality which people can enter.

After the vision for life is re-articulated, the intention to live out this vision must be fostered. It cannot be conjured or forced but must come from within through contemplation of the vision, prayer, and the grace of God at work. This intention will drive one to contemplate the means (or tools) to enter the vision.

Woolman first looked at what blocked him from entering the vision and sought to remove those roadblocks. This is a good starting place for anyone seeking healing from low self-worth as well (such as examining and letting go of unrealistic expectations, noted above). Second, several means of positioning oneself to encounter the Lord were utilized by Woolman which led to deep healing from low self-worth to self-worth. Study of the scriptures, silence and solitude, participation in gathered worship, study of spiritual readings, and meditation on God can all be found in John Woolman's life, especially in

the time of transition examined here.⁵⁶ These practices that position people before the Lord are generally regarded as helpful means of the Christian life. One such example is Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*.

Each of these disciplines are essential not just for the Christian life, but for God's people to know God experientially and to understand the fullness and greatness of Jesus' love. It is this aspect, the knowledge of God's love in relationship, that can heal the wound(s) of low self-worth and allow someone to see themselves in the fullness of reality before God as a person of worth. Therefore, people must be taught the practicalities of these disciplines if they are to understand and become aware of how to be healed from low self-worth and live into their ideal for life.

However, as evidenced by Woolman's life, the disciplines that lead to healing from God must be used to quite an extensive amount and throughout life. Woolman isolated himself from peer friends late in his teenage years in order to devote extensive time to God. It is after such extended periods that John Woolman entered the powerful ministry that he did. Part of raising awareness and understanding of healing from low self-worth must include creating a ministry of space – space for people to encounter God, meet with God, and take time to know God. This space must be fashioned, and room allowed for people to meet God in different ways, which may differ depending on the person.⁵⁷

Finally, it must be noted that Woolman did not set out to be healed from low self-worth or to feel better about himself. That was not his purpose for being with the Lord.

⁵⁶ Woolman, *Journal*, 28.

⁵⁷ Shawn Oliver, interview by author, November 2018.

His purpose was to live a life free from what he believed were sinful desires and to live a life that was filled with goodness and witness to the Lord. This point takes some consideration: should healing from low self-worth be the focus of teaching at all? Would an expectation of such a healing be detrimental to the development of a disciple of Jesus?

In the second chapter, it was found that God looked to heal Gideon not just for Gideon's sake, but for the purpose of a mission for God's people. However, God loves humanity enough to have both the individual and the community equally in mind. Individual wellbeing may be the first step in moving into God's purpose for someone's life. The focus must always include living a life with God in his righteousness and holiness. In seeking God, much will fall into place because healing only comes from God. The VIM principle is particularly helpful in creating such a methodology that can create both this focus of life with God and lead to healing from low self-worth.

However, community often plays an important role in people's healing. Even John Woolman attended Meetings (church community) regularly during his process of healing. In the next chapter, the role of community will be elaborated on for the healing process, and the importance of relationships to position someone from healing for low self-worth. This will be helpful to further raise awareness of low self-worth.

Application to the Implemented Curriculum – The Vision

Undeniably, one of the greatest lessons from John Woolman's life is how it speaks to those who have low self-worth, and the vision he sets for those who struggle with it. His life tells a story of God's wonderful working through a transformed servant to great effect on his people. John Woolman can be set before those with low self-worth

as a model for his humility, seeing himself and others in the light of the Lord. While space did not allow for this to be fully articulated, Woolman's *Journal* can help provide one concrete example of a life lived for God that can be a help in creating a realistic vision for people to use to correct unrealistic expectations today.

Conclusion

Analyzing and studying John Woolman's early years has uncovered treasures used in the implemented curriculum, including a methodology for healing from low self-worth, links between low self-worth, guilt, and shame, and a vision to utilize for healing before God from low self-worth. Each of these have an important place in raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. In the next chapter, low self-worth is placed in the context of theology, in order to garner further insights for a curriculum about low self-worth and about the healing love of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter describes *ubuntu* from a Christian perspective, the *imago dei*, community, and forgiveness and relates them to a person's worth and the healing love of God. Through the discovery of the vision for a human person's worth in *ubuntu* and *imago dei*, forgiveness becomes a key component to healing from low self-worth and in participating in a community which exhibits *ubuntu*. The chapter then details this in a practical manner. Finally, an ideal vision of community will also be described.

Introduction

This chapter begins with a statement concerning the topic, the reasons *ubuntu* theology and the concept of *imago dei* were chosen, and a description of both concepts. Both concepts are then be discussed in relation to low self-worth and provide an ideal vision for a human person's worth found in community. Three applications taught in the implemented curriculum are then given. These sections detail a method of forgiveness, the importance of pastoral discussions, and the need for future community building.

The main theological topic of investigation is low self-worth and the love of Christ which can heal low self-worth. The specific approach to this theological investigation is *ubuntu* from a Christian perspective. *Ubuntu* is a South African word and concept that details a way of being human and a way of life. Although difficult to

translate, *ubuntu* is generally translated into English as “personhood” or “humanness.”¹

The closest Western theological concept is *imago dei*. Both *ubuntu* and *imago dei* (image of God) wrestle with what it means to be human. Both concepts speak powerfully to a human being’s worth and how one can live in a way that is fully human. So, *ubuntu* and the *imago dei* are utilized to discover an ideal vision for a person’s worth which can help someone be positioned for healing from low self-worth.

These theological concepts were chosen over other streams of ideas and other concepts because of their direct connection to the methodology discovered in chapter three while also adding additional helpful elements for the context the curriculum was implemented in. Other useful theologies, such as *minjung* theology or transformational theology, may be helpful in other contexts. They are not the most beneficial or helpful for the context in question. Previous elements discovered in biblical and historical foundations chapters, such as the need for forgiveness and dealing with trauma (Gideon), and the need for vision (John Woolman), also pave the way for an exploration of *ubuntu* from a Christian perspective over other theologies. Finally, a needed component of community can be found in the theological concept of *ubuntu* which is absent from the individualistic findings in the biblical and historical foundation chapters. For all these reasons, *ubuntu* theology from a Christian perspective is the central focus of this chapter.

¹ Jaco S. Dreyer, “Ubuntu: A Practical Theological Perspective,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19, no. 1 (2015): 195, accessed August 27, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

Descriptions of Ubuntu and Imago Dei

Emeritus Bishop of South Africa Desmond Tutu's description of *ubuntu* is frequently used to begin discussions of *ubuntu*.² He describes *ubuntu* in this way:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobuntu'; 'hey, so-and-so had *ubuntu*.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.' It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather, 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.' A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.³

Carefully studying this description, one sees immediately several elements that are opposed to low self-worth. As a reminder to the reader, the signs of low self-worth are:

Feel isolated and unlovable. Tend to withdraw from other people. Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves. Be angry at others or at themselves, but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention. Have difficulty getting along with others. Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily. Have lower curiosity or creativity. Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others...Be jealous or critical of others. Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression. Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others. Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love. Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.⁴

If someone has *ubuntu*, they are not isolated but connected; not feeling unlovable but already known to be loved; not withdrawing but belonging; not jealous or critical but

² Brad A. Binau, "When Shame is the Question, How Does the Atonement Answer?" *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12, no. 1 (January 2002): 94, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.

³ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 31.

⁴ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 433.

affirming; not resistant to another's compliments but changeable by them; not too weak to overcome deficiencies but partners with others to overcome deficiencies. *Ubuntu* is not just an attitude or way of life that excludes several signs of low self-worth, it is also a way of life and thinking that can help to position a person to be healed from low self-worth. A deeper engagement between *ubuntu* and low self-worth occurs later in this chapter.

Imago dei, or "image of God," is a phrase used to describe the ontological relationship between the Creator God and human beings wherein human beings reflect or mirror God in some-way (Gen. 1:27). It has been construed to refer to the "human soul, the human mind, the human body, human dominion, human relations, human virtue, and human existence."⁵ This concept is highly debated and so large that it could not possibly be fully dealt with in this chapter. However, *ubuntu* naturally touches upon *imago dei* because of its emphasis on what it means to be human (i.e. personhood as a part of human nature) and the African emphasis on God as Creator in theology (which influences and affects how one sees God's creation).⁶

It hardly matters how one thinks about the concept of *imago dei* to see its relative impact upon self-worth. Someone who has a correct understanding of *imago dei* will be partly positioned for healing from low self-worth because they will know the intrinsic worth inherent in being human bestowed upon them by God. When this insight of *imago dei* touches the depths of a human being, it affects their perception of themselves.

⁵ Ryan S. Peterson, "The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 14 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 1-2.

⁶ Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2009), 1, 45.

Ubuntu Helps Inform an Understanding of the Imago Dei

Ubuntu contributes to and informs the *imago dei* primarily through the filter of personhood, meaning that humans reflect God's being in part because they have personhood, just as each member of the Trinity has personhood. Michael Battle, Professor of Church and Society at The General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, states that "a person depends on other persons to be a person. This is certainly the understanding Christians have of God as Trinity in which the three persons of God are so interdependent that all three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have one nature."⁷

A proper understanding of *ubuntu* and how it informs the *imago dei* must then define personhood as it relates to the Triune God and personhood as it relates to humans made in God's image. Philosophically, defining personhood is far beyond the reach of this chapter and the author. However, a point or two may be made to at least establish a ground to talk about it. Counterarguments will not be examined because such arguments have consumed many books (such as the extent of self-determination a person has in relation to God's sovereignty).

"Personhood" may be thought of as belonging to an existent being that has life, nature, substance, and properties. These properties include an awareness of self and some form of self-determination.⁸ God is an existent, uncreated being that has life, nature, substance, and properties, including self-awareness and self-determination. Therefore, God has personhood. For this discussion, it is most important to move

⁷ Battle, *Ubuntu*, 3.

⁸ Augustine Shutte, *The Mystery of Humanity* (Plumstead, South Africa: Snailpress, 1993), 29.

directly to the idea that God is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity, united by substance, nature and properties, are self-aware to distinguish one from another. They are also self-determining, demonstrating choice in their actions. For example, Jesus does as the Father commands as a testimony to the world that Jesus loves the Father in John 14:13. Each person of the Trinity has chosen to act in such a way that the primary word to describe God is “love” (1 John 4:8). A classic formulation of this is articulated by deceased theologian Thomas Oden, who describes Augustine’s argument as such: “Love requires a lover, a beloved, and a love that unites them, in a kind of three-in-oneness, for in speaking of these three, we are speaking only of a single reality, love.”⁹

The Trinity so intertwines and abides in each other, and their unity so great, that they are One; and could not be considered more than One, though there are three persons sharing a single nature, substance, and properties. The general word for this is called “perichoresis,” which is the “mutual interpenetration and indwelling” within the Trinity.”¹⁰ This does not nearly begin to explore the deep mysteries (and difficult philosophical definitions) required to assert the above claims but is enough to give a start to conversation around personhood, which can lead into the discussion of *ubuntu*.

Personhood in humans, being creatures who reflect the image of God, must also be comprised of existent beings who have life, nature, substance, and properties. Humans who do not have personhood yet, such as unborn babies, still have the *imago dei*

⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), 108.

¹⁰ Jele S. Manganyi and Johan Buitendag, “Perichoresis and Ubuntu within the African Christian Context,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): 1, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/4372>.

as a status.¹¹ Two elements of personhood can be described. The first element of personhood is an extent of self-determination.¹² A human being can choose an action or belief for a reason.¹³ The second property, not shared by God, is that personhood in humanity is “other-dependent.”¹⁴ Humanity is dependent on God for creation and continued existence. Humanity is also dependent on other created materials for normal existence. Finally, a human is dependent on other humans for the development of self physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.¹⁵ Humans help to shape others, are shaped by other human beings, and are shaped by God.

These two properties of personhood found in the *imago dei* are highlighted in *ubuntu*, which is not just a way of life (chosen actions and beliefs) but also a way of viewing the dependence of humanity. *Ubuntu* states “I am a person through other persons.” The idea is that a person is always shaped and formed by others in a variety of senses. A person can be shaped by other people through cultural worldviews or practices, through being parented and parenting, through friendships, through enemies. Each action, verbal and nonverbal, which acts upon a person is a shaping element of that person. Every response to an action grows out of the shaped person and in turn continues to shape the responder and the person responded to. In the same way, every action done

¹¹ Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 41-43.

¹² Shutte, *Mystery of Humanity*, 29.

¹³ Shutte, *Mystery of Humanity*, 30.

¹⁴ Shutte, *Mystery of Humanity*, 29.

¹⁵ Michael Battle, “Ubuntu: Learning from the African Worldview,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 53, no. 4 (Michaelmas 2010): 414, accessed October 31, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

by a person shapes that person and other people, if people are acted upon or affected.

Understanding *ubuntu* on this point sheds light on what it means to be made in the image of God.

Another important aspect of being made in the image of God is human worth. Considering the destiny of a human being and humanity will illuminate human worth. Dallas Willard, deceased philosophy professor at USC, writes, “We are, all of us, never-ceasing spiritual beings with a unique eternal calling to count for good in God’s great universe.”¹⁶ This specifically reveals the tremendous value and glory to which each human being is called. It places tremendous value on each human being and each community because of the eternal nature of each human being.

However, by the element of dependence, each human being relies on others to develop a self who can live out the eternal calling for good that God has called them to. This is why *ubuntu* is so important for how humans treat one another – it realizes that “my humanity is inextricably caught up in theirs” and “I am a human being because I belong, I participate, I share.”¹⁷ Realizing both the worth of self and others, our high calling, and the necessity of carrying out this calling in relationship with others is essential for healing from low self-worth. It can also motivate people to live rightly with others in love because of the deep worth that others have and the deep impact one’s actions can have on another in shaping and forming them (Mt. 22).

¹⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1997), 21.

¹⁷ Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

An essential part of living rightly in relationship with others, and a crucial aspect of *ubuntu* in the eyes of emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu is forgiveness.¹⁸ In this sinful world, the reality is that each person affects others and is affected by others in imperfect ways that do not demonstrate *ubuntu*. In order to heal from these wounds or traumas, forgiveness must take place. Forgiveness helps to allow the person to recover their own sense of self-worth while freeing them from the spiritual bondage to the perpetrator. The chains of enslavement to the perpetrator exist through the wounding event.¹⁹

Forgiveness also honors the other person's *imago dei* while admitting the reality of sin and woundedness. It honors the perpetrator's *imago dei* by releasing the perpetrator, who is bound to the victim and to the sin, until they are released by the victim. Finally, forgiveness is a crucial part of *ubuntu* as it shows compassion to the perpetrator, inviting the perpetrator back into the belonging of humanity and perhaps even offering reconciliation on this temporal plane. The perpetrator must also come to a place of forgiving oneself in order to reclaim self-worth, specifically after their own repentance and request for forgiveness takes place. A method of forgiveness is discussed later in this chapter.

Ubuntu also describes the part of the human self which desires belonging, which in turn gives some significance which all humans long for.²⁰ Self-worth is greatly affected by belonging. If one feels that one belongs, then one of the signs of low self-

¹⁸ Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*, ed. Douglas C. Abrams (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2014), 4, 8.

¹⁹ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 147.

²⁰ Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2013), 36-37.

worth will be treated. Without belonging, one will feel isolated and unlovable, which are signs of low self-worth and perpetuators of low self-worth, though they may not be direct causes of it.

Learning to belong to a community which values *ubuntu* should assist in the healing of low self-worth. *Ubuntu* expresses that one can only be a person through other people, which means that if someone belongs to a community, that community can speak the worth of a person into that person.²¹ More importantly, that community can help the person see themselves as God sees them. Without seeing one's self the way God sees them, "to that degree they suffer from a false identity and poor sense of worth."²²

This sort of community is essential, particularly in contexts where people are unable to perform actions that make them feel competent or that would give themselves a sense of self-worth. *Ubuntu* community is one that sees, receives, and loves an individual just because they exist. In receiving this loving community, one is enveloped into it and within relationship is able to reflect the love and worth received back upon others. This provides an essential role to all members of the community, regardless of their ability to perform certain actions.

The community can also be the place where the person flowers into beauty through their actions in relationships, such as helping others or living out other characteristics of *ubuntu*. In such a way, the fruit of the Spirit will grow, and one will begin to heal from low self-worth. In the implemented curriculum, community was

²¹ Nyengele M. Fulgence, "Cultivating Ubuntu: an African Postcolonial Pastoral Theological Engagement with Positive Psychology," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 24, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 4, 15, accessed September 15, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

²² Anderson, *Victory*, 44.

nurtured through the pastoral discussions, which are addressed later in this chapter.

Cultivation of further community efforts will need to take place at a later date.

Ubuntu and Christ: A Community Perspective

One of the most important aspects which has been unexplored by the sources read in the bibliography for this chapter is the nature of the *ubuntu* relationship between God and humans. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together* offers this amazing insight:

Second, a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ... Without Christ we should not know God, we could not call upon Him, nor come to Him. But without Christ we also would not know our brother, nor could we come to him. The way is blocked by our own ego. Christ opened the way to God and to our brother... Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through him are we bound together. To eternity he remains the one Mediator.²³

In this quote, Bonhoeffer is pointing out that true community and fellowship with others is only possible because of Christ and through Christ. Without Christ, pride and selfish desires (thinking only of self) hinders true relationships and fellowship because individuals strive against each other. Jesus breaks pride and selfish desires down by confronting humanity about sin and washing humans clean of sin. Second, in Jesus humanity becomes bound together as people walk with their eyes locked on Jesus, his Kingdom, and his Way. Third, as the Lord and Master, he is present in every interaction between self and others, so that people can choose to relate to others through Christ and in Christ. This is opposed to attempts to act like Christ on one's own power in relationship to others.

²³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1954), 23-24.

The truth of *ubuntu* is fully realized in Christianity when people become “persons through other persons” with Christ as the sole mediator of every interaction. John the fifteenth chapter is a good text to consider in future work. Humans only live in fruitful ways when they first abide in Jesus. There is a sense then that the words of Bonhoeffer create a tremendous impact on the worldview and lifestyle of *ubuntu*. If “I am a person through other persons” then Jesus is the first person anyone should be with. Second, as people relate to other people, those relations are not done on one’s own power or prerogative but done through the person of Jesus and in the power of Jesus. Stating this another way, self and Jesus are always relating to others together, just as one should see others relating with Jesus and not necessarily alone. By relying on Jesus in such a way, the two properties of *imago dei* are fulfilled: people choose Jesus (a certain extent of self-determination) and people are dependent on others. *Ubuntu* is also transformed by Christ so that people are formed through Christ and others as persons. When this is done, the ideal represented in *ubuntu* can bear fruit that will truly last.

True community is formed as people depend on Christ for their own persons, and second as they relate to others through Christ. If this is done, then *ubuntu* can be lived out in fullness – realizing the others humanity and dignity is bound up in one’s own. If true community is found, then low self-worth is more likely to be healed as people treat others with a deep level of respect and worth, which the wounded person will also receive.

Engagement with a Western Context

Ubuntu is something that contradicts low self-worth by its nature. It also critiques Western culture and values which can impact a person's self-worth. In order to see how this happens, a tour of causes of low self-worth, possible cultural facets which may lead to these causes, then *ubuntu's* helpfulness will be explored.

Collins, licensed clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Purdue University, lists several different causes of low self-worth including experiences of defeat or failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, and community influences and myths.²⁴ Two aspects of Western culture may lead to these experiences and thought processes.

First, Western individualism has a stereotyped myth which states, "pick yourself up by your bootstraps." The idea of rugged individuals making their own way in the world could also be considered a stereotype of the West and the United States in general. Battle comments that he believes the Western church is in so much trouble because of the "accumulation of individualism which leads to tribalism rather than community."²⁵ In such a situation, people strive against one another in competitive ways in order to find significance, value, purpose, and or economic benefits. This can feasibly lead to experiences of defeat or failure when one overcomes another. These experiences can lead to low self-worth, as cited above.

²⁴ Collins, *Counseling*, 431-432.

²⁵ Battle, *Ubuntu*, 73.

This Western individualism has unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, and community myths weaved into it. Believing that one individual can survive alone in the world demonstrates faulty thinking and is an unrealistic expectation on self. Each of these can be a cause of low self-worth. It can also be seen that the effects of other individuals taking advantage of one's self for their benefit or survival is also something that can affect one's sense of worth. Being taken advantage of or being considered as something less than a person of infinite worth can negatively impact self-worth.

This is not to say individuals are to be subsumed for the greater good within a communal group. Battle comments on the importance of the individual within the group by stating, "Without the personalizing thrust of the encounter with Christ, the logical conclusion for *Ubuntu* and other African philosophical approaches seems to be that persons have no existence apart from their relations with other persons."²⁶ Clearly, it would not promote self-worth to eliminate self from the equation by only existing for or through other people. Yet, *ubuntu* is a place to stand in the midst of an individualistic culture that has promoted self to the exclusion of true community and wounded self through unrealistic expectations and community myths.

Another way in which *ubuntu* challenges Western assumptions is the materialistic worldview/emphasis of the West. This might even be tied into the notion of people being labeled "consumers" by businesses. A materialistic worldview affects self-worth in two ways. First, it emphasizes possessing over belonging. Having ownership of things becomes a primary lens through which people in Western cultures see the world, which extends into relationships. The plague of pornography and lust in the United States is

²⁶ Battle, *Ubuntu*, 116.

simply one example of people objectifying others for their own benefits, which could be considered a form of possession over them. This possession takes the form of one's thoughts and or images of another being used whenever one wants, to be picked up and put down in a similar fashion to a TV remote.

Dovetailing on this first point, businesses treat people as “consumers” who are endlessly needful of possessions which are to be used and thrown out whenever. The idea that consumers are linked to profit incites businesses to have extended families live apart as much as possible. With each separate living space and each separated family and or family member comes additional profit as each living space needs certain appliances and materials to function in contemporary society.²⁷

From another angle, Battle comments that something is “clearly distorted when a people’s goal is to achieve ‘autonomy of market forces’ despite the concomitant result of atheism and dehumanization. This is clear because the result of how personhood is defined is through the value of the product a person produces.”²⁸ Battle is making statements about identity, which impacts one’s view of self. If a person is no longer producing a product, are they worth anything to themselves or others in a society dominated by materialism? Healing from low self-worth must involve a change of priority and emphasis, moving from a “consumer” or “producer” identity into one which sees self as a child of God and prioritizing relationships.

²⁷ Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), 47.

²⁸ Battle, *Ubuntu*, 81.

Second, materialism affects self-worth as it removes the knowledge of the primary desire of all people, which is God. God provides both the purpose and worth of humans that can lead to abundant life.²⁹ Materialism also removes the knowledge of prioritizing relationships and belonging while replacing it by possessing. Finally, materialism removes the knowledge of the ultimate destiny the *imago dei* proclaims because materialism states that this world is all there is and ever will be – there is no afterlife. There is no God. There is only the visible realm. Without God, there is only the standards of self or others to base our worth on – which humans will never truly reach.³⁰

Ubuntu, by its very nature, re-orientes, challenges, and rebukes Western individualism and materialism. *Ubuntu* reorients people to prioritizing relationships and belonging to community as the focal lens by which to see the world. Instead of prioritizing the possessing of things or people, or being consumers, *ubuntu* asks questions of character, respect, and right living between members of one's own house and one's community. *Ubuntu* not only refocuses life on relationships but seeks to balance “material and spiritual realities.”³¹

With all this in mind, it can be seen how *ubuntu* can be a gift to those looking to heal from low self-worth as it assists in rearranging priorities through challenging different aspects of Western culture, at least for those who live within Western culture.

²⁹ Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 9-10.

³⁰ McGee, *The Search for Significance*, 19.

³¹ Battle, *Ubuntu*, 76.

Ubuntu aptly challenges the individualistic and materialistic culture in which the church, as a part of the United States, is rooted in.

Building an Ideal Vision

The methodology in chapter three discussed the importance of having a vision of life to live into. The ideal vision which *ubuntu* shares with Christians is for a person to become a person through Christ and other people. The piece of this vision is to see oneself in relationship to the Almighty Trinity and to experience God through participation in their life together. In this life, one will come to realize the great, and biblically appropriate, worth one has because of the *imago dei*.³² As one is learning to live in the life of God, coming to realize one's worth and being healed from low self-worth, one will also encounter others. These others are also made in the image of God, and therefore will be worthy of loving in the same way God loves them. One will learn to join with others, discovering Christ's love by sharing that love and receiving that love from others (*ubuntu*). In doing so, one will begin to become one's true self while simultaneously being helped to heal from low self-worth and being an aid to heal others of their low self-worth. As one becomes one's true self while being healed and helping others to heal from low self-worth, community will become a focal point of life.

However, in this world community can still be a place where people hurt one another. So, in order to make the ideal vision concrete, imperfect community must be handled within the vision. This is where the crucial component of forgiveness and reconciliation comes in. As people relate to one another, healing from low self-worth and

³² McGee, *Significance*, 9-10.

learning fully their own worth in God and others worth in God, mistakes and sins against one another are bound to occur. Historical wounds and tensions may also come to the fore as people dwell with one another in community. Forgiveness must play an integral role and be a primary activity for those who are wounded and for those who wound. Forgiveness and reconciliation will allow true community to develop and, if done with God, to become stronger and more intimate than it was before.

These intimate relationships with God and others will carry into the majestic and eternal destiny God has for the redeemed in his great universe. The person who is shaped and formed here in Christlikeness will carry it, and relationships formed with it, into eternal life. In eternal life, relationships with God and others will be ever increasing in intimacy and volume within community.

Application to the Implemented Curriculum – Forgiveness: A Method

A connecting point between *ubuntu*, healing from low self-worth, community, and the *imago dei* is forgiveness. Forgiveness is crucial because it is a means to heal wounds that cause or impact low self-worth. Forgiveness helps one live out *ubuntu*, as forgiveness is a primary tool for life in community. Finally, forgiveness enables one to fulfill one's role as *imago dei* by reflecting God into the world, freely choosing to forgive others while recognizing the interdependence of humanity. This interdependence includes the idea that one who refuses to forgive another of their offense is harming one's, and the perpetrator's, humanity because humans are bound up in and with each

other.³³ In the words of Desmond Tutu, “Our humanity is bound up in one another, and any tear in the fabric of connection between us must be repaired for us all to be made whole.”³⁴

Desmond and Mpho Tutu in *The Book of Forgiving* describe a fourfold path for healing self and others through forgiveness, which will help shape the rest of this section, along with some input from other authors. A helpful precursor to Tutu and Tutu’s method of forgiveness is a quoted Gaelic proverb: “‘Nothing is easy for the unwilling.’ Without willingness, this journey will be impossible.”³⁵ This recalls the earlier discussion of the *imago dei*, in which one essential property is the ability to make choices. Without choosing to be willing to forgive others, the social fabric which makes *ubuntu* possible will be forever fractured. It could even be said the *imago dei* within someone will always be tarnished and twisted without a willingness to forgive.

The fourfold path of healing the Tutus describe include the following elements: “telling the story, naming the hurt, granting forgiveness, and renewing or releasing the relationship.”³⁶ Each step is as simple as the name of each part of the path of healing to describe, but difficult in practice.

³³ Berrisford Lewis, “Forging an Understanding of Black Humanity Through Relationship: An Ubuntu Perspective,” *Black Theology* 8, no. 1 (2010): 71, accessed September 15, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

³⁴ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 8.

³⁵ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 8.

³⁶ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 5.

Telling the story is the first part of the process, which may be done many times throughout the process.³⁷ The story is to be told factually in all of its detail.³⁸ Tutu argues that is best to tell the story directly to the perpetrator if the story telling is handled well and if the perpetrator is receptive.³⁹ A surrogate can also be used to listen to the story.⁴⁰ This was part of the opportunity within the pastoral discussions during the implemented curriculum, if the person voluntarily moved in that direction.

The second step is “naming the hurt.” Naming the hurt means to specifically identify and give voice to those things which have caused wounds. This moves beyond facts into the realm of feelings.⁴¹ One must acknowledge the hurt and the hate one might have toward the perpetrator, including self.⁴² Naming the hurt completes the process of moving someone out of the stage of denying that what took place did not hurt.⁴³ Finally, naming the hurt helps the forgiver find freedom “from the resentment, anger, shame, or self-loathing that can fester and build inside us when we do not touch our pain and learn to forgive.”⁴⁴ Notice how several signs of low self-worth (including self-loathing) are mentioned in this statement and how freedom can be found from them when individuals tell the story, name the hurt, and move into a place of forgiveness.

³⁷ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 82.

³⁸ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 74.

³⁹ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 82-84.

⁴⁰ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 82.

⁴¹ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 95.

⁴² Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 193.

⁴³ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 102.

⁴⁴ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 96.

Third, the forgiver is to “grant forgiveness.” Granting forgiveness arises from an understanding of *ubuntu*, or the shared humanity that connects all people.⁴⁵ One specified place of connection in this chapter was interjecting Jesus as the mediator between all people. This leads to the importance of considering the story of Jesus and his work on the cross, which “makes forgiveness legally and morally right.”⁴⁶ Forgiveness is right for a person to do because they themselves have been forgiven by Jesus on the basis of his blood, not on the basis of any action, guilt, or penance done by the person forgiven.⁴⁷

Forgiveness is as simple as saying the words, but the fullness of the past event must be confronted deep in the heart for forgiveness to truly occur.⁴⁸ Many signs of true forgiveness can then happen, such as a weight being lifted, feeling overwhelming peace, wishing the perpetrator well or at least no longer wishing them harm, and feeling freedom from the wounding event and person.⁴⁹ Finally, a new story takes the place of telling the facts of suffering or naming the hurt. It is a story that “recognizes the story of the one who hurt you...recognizes our shared humanity...in a way that reveals how it has ennobled rather than embittered them.”⁵⁰ Helpful practices here may include writing what was forgiven on a piece of paper and then destroying it.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 125.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 193.

⁴⁷ McGee, *Significance*, 93.

⁴⁸ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 128.

⁴⁹ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 128-129.

⁵⁰ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 129-130.

⁵¹ Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 194.

In the fourth step, the forgiver renews or releases the relationship. This step acknowledges that “a relationship is created and maintained by the very act of harm that stands between you. This relationship, like every relationship that calls for forgiveness, must be either renewed or released.”⁵² Since *ubuntu* says, “I am incomplete without you,” and understanding the *imago dei* should reflect God’s own actions in Jesus on the cross, renewal and restoration is the suggested hard work as a result of forgiveness.⁵³ Renewal is the building of a new relationship from the ashes of the old one; it is not going back to the way the old relationship functioned.⁵⁴ However, this is not always possible, which is why releasing the relationship is a part of the fourfold path.

One important clarification for the one who forgives: the perpetrator may or may not change based on the act of forgiveness. In fact, no change may occur in the perpetrator. The role of the forgiver then becomes praying for the one forgiven.⁵⁵

Application to the Implemented Curriculum – Pastoral Discussions

This fourfold path of forgiveness was made available during pastoral discussions, if the subject voluntarily moved in that direction. In order to position people for healing from low self-worth, some people needed to work through some stories or a story which has harmed their sense of self-worth. One part of the pastoral discussions enabled people to have a safe place to share difficult stories which they may never have been able to

⁵² Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 147.

⁵³ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 150.

⁵⁴ Tutu and Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, 155.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 194.

share before. The sharing of these stories may have been the first step in forgiving, which will also be a first step in healing from low self-worth.

Pastoral discussions were also important to the curriculum in one other way. Primarily, pastoral discussions helped to initiate people into experiencing *ubuntu* through a deeper relationship because the pastor modeled humility, attentiveness, hospitality, compassion, and caring, which are parts of the definition of *ubuntu*.

Application to the Implemented Curriculum – Cultivating Community and Belonging

The research on *ubuntu* and its relationship to the *imago dei* emphasized the importance of intimate relationship and community in the church. Therefore, it was important to help people cultivate a deep sense of belonging to God and to one another. This sense of belonging can help people heal from low self-worth by allowing others to speak and reflect worth into each other's lives. The most important element for inclusion during in the implemented curriculum was to raise awareness of and plant the seed in the church that intimacy and belonging are important for the church and the healing of low self-worth.

At a future time, a follow-up task will be the building of community in the church. Possible avenues for exploration are small groups, including Bible studies and or prayer groups, and community events that are organized to build relationships. Creating true community that reflects an understanding of *ubuntu* will take time but will be worth the effort.

Conclusion

Community is an action and a lifestyle that can position someone to be healed from low self-worth and help to heal someone from low self-worth. The theology of *ubuntu* directly relates to the *imago dei*. Both impact one's idea of community. These three ideas combined, and the implemented action of these three ideas, can help to position someone to experience healing from low self-worth. Next, psychology will be turned to in order to shine light on the many topics interwoven with low self-worth that were encountered throughout the other chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

This chapter will investigate secular and Christian psychology, specifically looking at the theory of self-esteem, which usually includes self-worth. This direction is a natural step for seeking dialogue and answers to several different questions related to self-worth that were brought up in previous chapters.

Introduction

Throughout the course of research in the previous chapters, which contained biblical, historical, and theological studies, several questions and ideas were raised about the nature of low self-worth and how to position people for healing from low self-worth. Psychology has studied the issue of self-esteem during the late twentieth and twenty first century. Therefore, this field (psychology), and the concept of self-esteem, was the obvious choice for this chapter. Psychology can help address the issues and questions brought up in previous research. For each previous chapter, there were several areas of investigation mentioned that are discussed. The primary scientific model of engagement with psychology is one of dialogue, with possible integration elements weaved within.

This chapter begins with a very brief introduction to behaviorism, humanism, and self-theory. A very brief explanation of Christian theology is then given to contrast

psychology with Christian theology. Dialogue with each of the other chapters then commences, the content of which is outlined next.

In chapter two, three noteworthy topics were found which are addressed: the definition of low self-worth and its relation to self-esteem, the link between trauma and low self-worth, and the substantial effect low self-worth can have on a person's life. While examining the definition of low self-worth, it is found that both self-worth and self-esteem primarily involve a self-evaluation. However, a defense will be given for isolating self-worth from self-esteem. The link between trauma and low self-worth will be mentioned to connect the two well-enough for the purposes of the implemented curriculum. However, this subject is not delved into in depth. Third, psychology validates the substantial impact low self-worth can have on a person's life.

Second, in the chapter three, there are another three topics that were identified to be addressed: the nature of guilt (healthy and unhealthy guilt), the importance of humility in relation to self-worth, and the validity of the VIM (vision, intention, means) principle for moving towards healing. The nature of guilt (healthy and unhealthy) is discussed, especially in relation to values and self-evaluation. The importance of humility and the need for clear, realistic engagement with self is also explored. Finally, the VIM model is engaged as a way of cultivating one's self worth.

Third, the importance of community and forgiveness is addressed in relation to low self-worth based upon the research in the chapter four. It is found that forgiveness has direct implications for self-worth while community is of varied importance depending on the source read. A harmonizing view of community is presented in the

relevant section. Finally, a new element discovered while researching self-esteem in psychology is described: the inner critic and its relation to low self-worth.

The research into self-esteem in psychology will directly relate to and support much of the research found in the other chapters. New information is shared in relation to the conclusions from each chapter.

Behaviorism and Humanism

Two theories in psychology that have existed in the last one hundred years are behaviorism and humanism. Behaviorism is a school of psychology that theorizes that all behavior can be explained “as a product of learning, and all learning consists of conditioning.”¹ This school of thought believes that humans are a blank slate at birth and all behavior is learned via encountering external forces. Humanism is a theory which emphasizes the inner life of a person, including “free will, responsibility, and self-actualization.”² Humanism believes that the human being is good and powerful enough in its own will to make changes in self. It is this school which would promote self-esteem as an important concept for understanding human behavior and motivations.

More recently, since the 1970’s, “self” has become one point for focused research in psychology.³ Mark Leary and June Price Tangney, co-authors of a chapter on self in

¹ Andrew M. Colman, “Behaviorism,” in *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 2003), 83.

² Andrew M. Colman, “Humanistic Psychology,” in *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 2003), 340.

³ Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney, “The Self as an Organizing Construct in the Behavioral and Social Sciences,” in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd ed, ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2012), 1, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VukSQuVMQy0C&lpg=PP1&ots=L0OTiHdt9y&dq=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&lr&pg=PA10#v=onepage&q=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&f=false>.

the *Handbook of Self and Identity*, call this “self-theory.”⁴ This theory and area of research includes many aspects of studies on self, including self-esteem.⁵ Primarily, self-theory begins with the human self, self-reflection, personality, and definitions thereof.⁶

Christian theology, in contrast with these three theories, begins with the action and being of God. It recognizes the external forces which can dictate or direct behavior (such as fleshly desires and or the grace of God and the Holy Spirit). It also recognizes the role of self in action, including the fact that humans can choose to act in ways that are obedient to the Lord’s commands or not. Regarding worth, Christian theology locates worth in an external source, God. Behaviors can originate both from inner motivations and through external forces.

Theme – Definition of Self-Worth

While the definition of self-worth was first mentioned in the introduction, the definition of self-worth and its relationship to self-esteem is explored here. There are four points to this section: a statement of the definition of self-worth, a description of how self-worth is often combined under self-esteem, a swift argument for why self-worth must be separated from self-esteem, and finally an argument for why this is particularly important in the research context of South Union church.

⁴ Leary and Tangney, “The Self as an Organizing Construct,” 15, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VukSQuVMQy0C&lpg=PP1&ots=L0OTiHdt9y&dq=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&lr&pg=PA10#v=onepage&q=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&f=false>.

⁵ Leary and Tangney, “The Self as an Organizing Construct,” 10, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VukSQuVMQy0C&lpg=PP1&ots=L0OTiHdt9y&dq=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&lr&pg=PA10#v=onepage&q=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&f=false>.

⁶ Leary and Tangney, “The Self as an Organizing Construct,” 1-15, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VukSQuVMQy0C&lpg=PP1&ots=L0OTiHdt9y&dq=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&lr&pg=PA10#v=onepage&q=behaviorism%20and%20self-esteem&f=false>.

First, it was stated that self-worth is a positive evaluation of one's worth, specifically by means of knowing the reality of God's love and one's identity as a child of God. This view has support from a Christian psychologist, Eric Johnson, who states:

However, in the Christian scheme of things, self-esteem is fundamentally bipolar. It is an interpersonal feeling, rooted in one's experiential knowledge of God and his values. God is the ultimate referent for our self-esteem. The experience of self-esteem is our penultimate, consequent, affective response to seeing ourselves in his light.⁷

It was also mentioned that the definition for self-esteem by Collins, licensed clinical psychologist with a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Purdue University, included the evaluation of worth, competence, and significance.⁸

Second, in general terms, the definition of self-esteem seems to include self-worth whether stated or implied; sometimes it seems to be identical. Nathaniel Branden, a psychotherapist, writes, "Self-esteem has two interrelated aspects: it entails a sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth. It is the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect. It is the conviction that one is competent to live and worthy of living."⁹ Like Collins, Branden seems to separate the components of self-esteem into areas of competence and worth. However, this is not so with every researcher in the field of self-esteem. Rosenberg, creator of the still-used self-esteem scale in psychology,

⁷ Eric L. Johnson, "Self-Esteem in the Presence of God," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17, no. 3 (1989): 231.

⁸ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 425-426.

⁹ Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem: A Revolutionary Approach to Self-Understanding that Launched a New Era in Modern Psychology*, 32nd anniversary ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1969), 110.

simply names self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude toward self.¹⁰ Campbell, author of *The New Science: Self-Esteem Psychology*, defines self-esteem as an “awareness of good possessed by self,” then goes on to name related terms, including self-worth.¹¹ More recently, a group of professors defined self-esteem as “literally defined by how much value people place on themselves. It is the evaluative component of self-knowledge.”¹²

These various definitions in the field of psychology show that it is agreed upon by all that both self-esteem and self-worth involve a self-evaluation component and that the two concepts are related, whether implicitly or explicitly. Those definitions of self-esteem that imply self-worth as a component of self-esteem do not exclude the concept of worth, but leave the various components integrated. Perhaps this is due to the deep relatedness of self-worth and competence in relation to self-esteem.¹³ With this integration in mind, a defense of using “self-worth” instead of “self-esteem” must be addressed.

Third, for this curriculum, self-worth must be separated out from self-esteem. While self-worth is integrated as a part of self-esteem in psychology, Christian theology

¹⁰ Morris Rosenberg, *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 30.

¹¹ Robert N. Campbell, *The New Science: Self-Esteem Psychology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 9-10.

¹² Roy F. Baumeister et al., “Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4, no. 1 (May 2003): 2, accessed December 6, 2018, doi:10.1111/1529-1006.01431.

¹³ Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning, *Self-Esteem: A Proven Program of Cognitive Techniques for Assessing, Improving, and Maintaining Your Self-Esteem*, 4th ed. (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2016), 23.

provides certain nuances that makes it important to distinguish the components of self-esteem and draw out self-worth to stand alone.

Within self-esteem, self-worth and competence are generally conflated together. However, in Christian theology, self-worth is to be known by means of knowing the reality of God's love and one's identity as God's child. Therefore, it must be separated out from areas of competence in resolving life's issues. For example, Branden mentions the relationship between self-esteem and self-worth stating,

The two aspects of self-esteem - self-confidence and self-respect - can be isolated conceptually, but they are inseparable in a man's psychology. Man makes himself worthy of living by making himself competent to live: by dedicating his mind to the task of discovering what is true and what is right, and by governing his actions accordingly.¹⁴

However, according to scripture and Christian theology, people have worth simply by existing, not because of their performance or competence. In fact, it can be shown that self-esteem can be enhanced through a relationship with a loving God, which includes one's sense of personal worth.¹⁵ There is also an important indication that self-worth must be held separately from competence so that when one's performance fails or ends, one may still retain a healthy sense of self-worth. McKay writes, "Self-esteem has nothing to do with avoiding mistakes. Self-esteem is rooted in your unconditional acceptance of yourself as an innately worthy being, regardless of mistakes."¹⁶ For this curriculum, self-worth is rooted not just in acceptance of self, but first in God's acceptance of human persons.

¹⁴ Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 114.

¹⁵ Anastasia Victoria L. H. Ho and Tick Ngee Sim, "The Development and Validation of a God-Centered Self-Esteem Scale," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 37, 42-43, accessed November 11, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

¹⁶ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 173.

Fourth and finally, in the context of South Union church, where the aging congregation has their performance and competence for living challenged or even stolen from them by disease, strokes, or other health problems, the distinction between self-worth and competence becomes even more important. Therefore, it is also important not to base the project fully on “self-esteem” knowing that competence for living must also be pulled into the curriculum at that time. Instead, focusing on self-worth through God’s love maintains both its rightful place and definition within this project. Future work can move into the realm of competence for living, including full acceptance of self, defeat of the inner critic, and enhancing skills or knowledge for a situational task.¹⁷ However, for this chapter, it is to be understood that the field of psychology generally speaks of “self-esteem,” while self-worth will continue to be referred to for the reasons stated above.

Chapter Two – Trauma and Self-Worth

In chapter two, in the middle of building a case for Gideon’s low self-worth, it was noted that a possible trauma may have occurred in Gideon’s past which helped give rise to low self-worth. A note was made to investigate this link in psychology in order to assist in raising awareness of and positioning people for healing from low self-worth.

One study on abuse victims and their symptoms of abuse points to a correlation between low self-worth, self-esteem and trauma. This study found that abuse history significantly impacted the self-esteem scale in the direction of low self-esteem.¹⁸ Since

¹⁷ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 15, 21-23.

¹⁸ John Briere and Marsha Runtz, "Differential Adult Symptomatology Associated with Three Types of Child Abuse Histories," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 14 (1990): 361, accessed December 6, 2018, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/36da/ba1b4c865a4cd07c671e335eae0025de653.pdf>.

abuse is by nature traumatic, the link between abuse history and lower self-esteem on the self-esteem scale shows that there is a link between low self-worth and trauma. Healing from these traumas can also be a route to healing from low self-worth.

In another study on post-traumatic stress disorder, the authors state that central emotions to traumatic stress are “the dimensions of helplessness, powerlessness, and threat to one’s life.”¹⁹ The feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and threat directly associate to the competence to navigate and handle life, which could affect self-esteem. Again, on healing from low self-esteem, McKay writes “Core beliefs are the very foundation of your self-esteem...Core beliefs are frequently distorted by early trauma and deprivation.”²⁰ Finally, van der Kolk states, “Traumatized people often fail to maintain a personal sense of significance, competence, and inner worth.”²¹ This link is not something that can be taken for granted, as the link between trauma and low self-esteem has had ambiguous findings in the past.²²

One point that must be commented on is the understanding that trauma does not have to be “severe” in order to produce lasting harm in someone’s life. One’s perception of a trauma plays a role in its effects. For example, in the chapter three, John Woolman’s

¹⁹ Alexander C. McFarlane and Giovanni de Girolamo, “The Nature of Traumatic Stressors and the Epidemiology of Posttraumatic Reactions,” in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1996), 136.

²⁰ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 301.

²¹ Bessel A. van der Kolk, “The Complexity of Adaptation to Trauma Self-Regulation, Stimulus, Discrimination, and Characterological Development,” in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1996), 197.

²² Briere and Runtz, "Differential Adult Symptomatology," 358, accessed December 6, 2018, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/36da/ba1b4c865a4cd07c671e335eae0025de653.pdf>.

incident with the mother robin was one piece of his low self-worth. Others may look at that incident and not see anything traumatic about it at all.

On a practical note for the implemented curriculum, it was crucial to keep in mind people's history and trauma when seeking to position people for healing from possible wounds underlying low self-worth. Professional counseling referrals were known so that people could be referred in case of PTSD, abuse, etc.

A second type of trauma was also mentioned in chapter two, namely the effects of oppression and war on a people's evaluation of their own worth. There is, at minimum, validity for such an idea. Alexander, a professor of Sociology at Yale University, writes "Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."²³ Future work viewing the prophet in Judges 6:7-10 and Gideon as members of the "carrier group," a group of collective agents in the trauma process who shape and make meaning of events in the public sphere, would be one opportunity for exploration.²⁴ Linking the meaning making to low self-worth, and the interactions between those two concepts, may bear some fruit for further understanding both.

Relating cultural trauma to South Union Church may have relevance especially in the experiences of some congregants. A study of the effects of aging on the congregation, and or a study of the described "golden age" and how things have changed from fifty-seventy years ago, may bear fruit in raising awareness about low self-worth.

²³ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2004), 10.

²⁴ Alexander, "Cultural Trauma," 11.

One area for future work includes “Stereotype embodiment theory” which addresses ageism, and which might have a connection to cultural trauma.²⁵

This falls readily into an area for future work, as the study of collective trauma and meaning making takes on a life of its own. The effects on personal self-worth are most likely tied into the meaning made from the memories of the trauma and the identity construction taking place in this shared meaning-making. However, there is evidence that collective trauma directly impacts self-esteem.²⁶

Chapter Two – How Serious is Low Self-Worth?

One of the primary findings in chapter two was the substantial effects of low self-worth on a person’s life. Many of those read in the bibliography on the issue of low self-worth indicate that low self-worth is serious, resulting in pain if one does not value oneself. This pain includes the signs of low self-worth, such as depression, and an inability to see reality clearly (including God’s love). McKay writes in his opening, “Self-esteem is essential for psychological survival...without some measure of self-worth, life can be enormously painful, with many basic needs going unmet.”²⁷ This pain can include emotional and physical symptoms, such as “anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt, the sense of being unfit for reality, inadequate to existence.”²⁸

²⁵ Matthew Fullen, interview by author, February 2019.

²⁶ Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (August 2018): 2, accessed November 11, 2018, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01441/full>.

²⁷ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 1.

²⁸ Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 143.

However, it is important to note that self-esteem “is a perception rather than a reality.”²⁹ With this, it is important to see the role one’s own beliefs and perceptions have in relation to one’s evaluation of one’s worth. How one values self affects one’s actions and influences relationships.³⁰ Therefore, low self-worth is a very serious result of wounding, with lasting and harmful effects unless it is healed. In fact, it has been found that people with higher self-esteem take more initiative to acquire leadership roles, something that directly impacts South Union church.³¹

In the recent history of South Union (2017 and prior), willingness to participate in particular roles has been lacking, particularly the Elder board. One vacancy has been present for three out of five years (at the time of Fall 2018). Self-driven initiatives requiring leadership have been few, even with a great deal of encouragement given. Within the context, there is a fear of criticism that comes with a leadership position and or a new initiative. Low self-worth can be seen to directly impact the church body. This fact has not been drawn out before. It is a crucial learning to help persuade people of the substantial effects of low self-worth and motivating people to position themselves for healing.

²⁹ Baumeister et al., “Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance,” 2, accessed December 6, 2018, doi:10.1111/1529-1006.01431.

³⁰ Baumeister et al., “Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance,” 2, accessed December 6, 2018, doi:10.1111/1529-1006.01431.

³¹ Christopher Mason, Karen Mason, and Alice Mathews, “Aspiring to Lead: An Investigation into the Interactions Between Self-Esteem, Patriarchal Attitudes, Gender, and Christian Leadership,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 246, accessed November 11, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

Chapter Three – Guilt

When researching chapter three, it was noted how guilty John Woolman felt, based on the frequency of the statements of feeling guilt and shame in his *Journal*. Attentiveness to his feelings of guilt and shame, combined with an analysis of this section of his *Journal* using other signs of low self-worth, led to the conclusion that Woolman did indeed suffer from low self-worth during his early years. One question that arose was the nature of healthy and unhealthy guilt because the guilt John Woolman experienced was a factor in his low self-worth. Navigating guilt becomes one element in raising awareness about low self-worth. While the nature of healthy and unhealthy guilt must be explored, it is crucial to present a way to understand guilt so that it does not impact one's sense of self-worth.

Specifically, subjective guilt is discussed in this section because it correlates most closely with John Woolman's experience. It is to be remembered that subjective guilt can either be appropriate or inappropriate, or in other words, healthy and unhealthy. Collins defines appropriate subjective guilt feelings as those which are "present when we have broken a law, disobeyed biblical teachings, or violated the dictates of our conscience and feel remorse in proportion to the seriousness of our actions."³² Inappropriate guilt feelings are "out of proportion to the seriousness of the act."³³

Guilt, then, is primarily a feeling triggered when an individual transgresses perceived righteousness boundaries.³⁴ McKay points out that guilt is a response to a

³² Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 179.

³³ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 179.

³⁴ Nancy Stiehler Thurston, "Shame and Guilt in Christian Children: Interventions with Projective Techniques and Play Therapy," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 378, accessed July 28, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

healthy or unhealthy value which is being transgressed.³⁵ This reorients the discussion from a focus on the feeling of guilt to a discussion of concrete values from which the guilt flows. An opportunity for further work could be to help people navigate through guilt by an analysis of their values. A short description of healthy values and the forerunning value of being a person who has self-worth because of God will be given below as a way of beginning such work in specific relation to low self-worth.

A healthy value is characterized by McKay as one that is realistic, flexible, owned rather than introjected, and life-enhancing.³⁶ This is, he states, opposed to values that generate a “tyranny of shoulds” which have an absolute nature of belief, “the unbending nature of right and wrong. If you do not live up to your shoulds, you judge yourself to be a bad and unworthy person.”³⁷ In an interview, Kathrine, a licensed professional clinical counselor, noted that “should” seems to come from an external or internal force creating a certain value that lacks the needed inner motivation or desire to live out that value.³⁸ Self-worth rooted in God will help to minimize the impact of the “shoulds” one gives self and will then help with the further work of analyzing the values and “shoulds” causing the guilt.

The primary value to be operated from is one that understands the reality of Christ’s work and takes ownership of what his work means. Being realistic understands that Christ is the model for living, the Bible is the infallible word, and that God is the one who will bring the good work to completion (Phil. 1:6). In this life, Christians are to

³⁵ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 47.

³⁶ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 134-136.

³⁷ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 132.

³⁸ Kathrine Williams, interview, December 2018.

learn to walk as the new creations which Christ has made (2 Cor. 5:17). All sin has already been taken care of (2 Cor. 5:21). Mistakes are expected, which is where forgiveness is given and received. In all of this, Christ has already declared his love for humanity and the worth of humanity (Jn 3:16). The other aspect of a healthy Christian value is ownership – taking responsibility for the values above and learning to live them out. Understanding correct doctrine, and working through it in a period of guilt, can help to alleviate a negative evaluation of self-worth and work directly with the issue at hand. For this project, the important aspect is to understand that actions are not to impact evaluation of self as a being of worth. Instead, guilt, values, and actions can be worked through from a place of being rooted in God as a person of worth.

Chapter Three – Humility

One of the key aspects of the original definition of self-worth was humility. Humility was defined as the clear, realistic understanding of one's own position in relationship to God, to self, and to others. It neither values oneself lower nor higher than others, recognizing that all stand equally loved by God. In chapter three, John Woolman's humility was elaborated upon as a sign that he had healed from low self-worth.

Seeing oneself rightly, including one's strengths and weaknesses, is an essential part of raising self-esteem (and humility according to the above definition).³⁹ Campbell, when taking time to elaborate on Christian psychology, states the following about growth of self-esteem:

By this they mean peeling away our usual layers of self-deception to arrive at an honest glimpse of what sort of persons we really are. This in turn means honestly facing up to our true motivations. This is the true humility, honest knowledge

³⁹ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 50.

about self, about self in its most important aspect, its loves, values, and motives. And when we have said 'motives,' we have said loves and values.⁴⁰

People with low self-worth tend to deceive themselves by warping their negative features to be even more negative. McKay states, “People with low self-esteem do not see themselves clearly. Like a reflection in a warped fun house mirror, the image they see magnifies their weaknesses and minimizes their assets.”⁴¹

One piece of the deception is that the inner critic warping these negative features is serving a function that makes the person feel better about themselves in the short term. The inner critic helps the person with low self-worth to help cope with feelings of “anxiety, helplessness, rejection, and inadequacy. Paradoxically, while the critic is beating you up, he is also making you feel better.”⁴² Those with low self-worth must take note of this and take steps to overcome the voice in their mind telling them they are unworthy. The inner critic is discussed in a section at the end of this chapter.

McKay provides four helpful rules to follow when assessing self in order to strip distortions away and bring reality to bear: “Use nonpejorative language. Use accurate language – do not exaggerate and do not embellish the negative. Use language that is specific rather than general. Find exceptions or corresponding strengths.”⁴³ While appropriate for helping one to find humility, the important part of this is to state the facts regarding God’s love for human beings (including self) and the intrinsic worth of self because of his love. As Christians, evaluation of self is never based in one’s own

⁴⁰ Campbell, *The New Science*, 62.

⁴¹ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 50.

⁴² McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 24.

⁴³ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 55-56.

opinions, but God's opinions, which is why the above can be stated.⁴⁴ Following these rules were helpful to position people for healing from low self-worth and for understanding low self-worth. Removal of poetic and embellished language was necessary for the implemented curriculum. Instead, God's love must be given accurately and in bare facts: His love is infinite and unending.

As seen during the discussion of chapter four below, humility is necessary in other areas, including forgiveness. It is necessary to forgiveness in two ways: first, confronting reality also means confronting trauma(s), and second, humility assists in seeing the perpetrator of trauma as a fallible human in need of grace. However, the rest of chapter three is discussed before moving into a discussion of chapter four.

Chapter Three – VIM

In chapter three, Dallas Willard's pattern for transformation (VIM – vision, intention, means) was utilized to offer a methodology explaining John Woolman's transformation from low self-worth to healthy self-worth. This method includes a vision for self (which must be realistic), the intention to do it, and the necessary means (tools or steps) to carry it out. The vision must be done with humility, as creating an ideal which cannot be lived up to would be deadly to someone's self-worth.

Campbell's tweaking of William James' equation for self-esteem is helpful to discuss here. Campbell states that self-esteem is: "Actual self-image divided by ideal self-image."⁴⁵ This quote translates a mathematical image into words. In order to have

⁴⁴ Eric L. Johnson, "Self-Esteem in the Presence of God," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17, no. 3 (1989): 233.

⁴⁵ Campbell, *The New Science*, 235.

self-esteem, a vision, or an ideal image, of self must be present. For raising awareness of low self-worth, understanding the unknown self-image must be discussed and be made explicit. In order to increase one's self-esteem, by the above equation, one can either make the ideal self-image less by making it more realistic or increase the vitality of the actual self-image through action steps that can be undertaken (such as thinking about God's love for self, five minutes per day, every day).

When thinking about self-worth, the guiding vision must include a vivid picture of receiving God's love and what that does for self. In this scenario, it is not about doing something greater, nor is it about improving one's competence. It is about receipt of a gift of God's love and his evaluation of self. This is a change to a core belief, which determines to what degree worth is felt.⁴⁶

The discussion of intention and means is a definite item for dialogue with those who enter pastoral discussion sessions. The means are to include scripture study of specific passages around God's love and prayer, noted in books such as *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Search for Significance*. Other spiritual disciplines can be used as needed. These are helpful practices for obtaining the desired vision of healthy self-worth. Indeed, these practices are things that can position people to understand the love of God. Some may experience God's direct healing touch through these practices.

Chapter Four – Forgiveness

The means presented above may not be the only things required if past trauma(s) or wound(s) are affecting one's understanding of self-worth. Drawing on threads weaved

⁴⁶ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 301.

all throughout the other chapters, the following can be stated: when people are humbling themselves to see reality clearly, trauma(s) may come into view and fill someone with guilt and or shame, lowering their self-worth as their actual self-image is different from their ideal. Depending on the severity and nature of the trauma, professional help may be needed; it may be necessary to make a referral.

Part of healing from trauma in a way that raises worth in self and in others is to forgive.⁴⁷ Self or others may need to be forgiven. One essential finding in the examination of psychology's self-esteem theory is the relationship between forgiveness and acceptance. Acceptance is the "acknowledgment of the facts, with all value judgments suspended."⁴⁸ An event is what it is without any need for rationalization or avoidance. It involves telling the story so that the compulsion to relive the trauma and or story subconsciously can be resolved. This confronting of reality, which must happen, may need professional guidance.⁴⁹ Forgiveness then "flows out of understanding and acceptance. Like those two traits, it does not mean approval. It means letting go of the past, reaffirming self-respect in the present, and looking toward a better future."⁵⁰

While forgiveness is essential for healing from trauma and navigating life in community, there are different methods for forgiving. For example, McKay lists three statements and three questions that can assist someone in understanding the humanness of the other person(s) involved in order to assist the process of forgiveness:

⁴⁷ Julie M. Douglas, "Self-Esteem: A Basic Need for Many Priests and Religions," *AFER* 39, no. 3 (June 1997): 184, accessed November 11, 2018, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁸ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 112.

⁴⁹ Bruce Alan Kehr, *Becoming Whole: A Healing Companion to Ease Emotional Pain and Find Self-Love* (Austin, TX: Greenleaf Books, 2018), 29.

⁵⁰ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 112.

What need was (he, she, I) trying to meet with that behavior? What beliefs or awareness influenced the behavior? What pain, hurt, or other feelings influenced the behavior? I wish ____ had not happened, but it was merely an attempt to meet (his, her, my needs). I accept (him, her, myself) without judgment or feeling of wrongness for that attempt. No matter how unfortunate (his, her, my) decision, I accept the person who did it as someone who is, like all of us, trying to survive.⁵¹

Two other statements are provided as ways to assert that one can let go: “It is over, I can let go of it. Nothing is owed for this mistake.”⁵² While these questions may be sufficient if one person interrupts another person in conversation, there are issues with the above inquiries.

The above questions seem borderline abusive to ask some people depending on the trauma they have experienced. Asking these questions of a rape victim or child abuse victim has the potential to re-traumatize them. Instead, asking other sorts of questions to draw out the perpetrator’s humanness could work, especially in conjunction with teaching on *ubuntu*. One such question to ask could be, “Do you think the perpetrator imagined becoming a (child abuser/rapist) when they themselves were a child? What experiences might have driven them to become who they were?”⁵³ These questions can be used to draw out the humanness of a perpetrator in the victim’s eyes without asking them to consider the “need” of the perpetrator or accept the perpetrator’s behavior as good.

Chapter Five – Community

Forgiveness is a necessity for living life in community, especially if one is to maintain one’s self-worth. In some cases, forgiveness requires community to work

⁵¹ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 113-114.

⁵² McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 114.

⁵³ Kathrine Williams, interview with author, December 9, 2018.

through. Accepting, loving community is also necessary for someone to help understand their low self-worth and to receive the guiding words that they are filled with worth.

However, there is concern that someone may begin to esteem the approval and praise of others instead of the approval and worth that comes from God. Campbell notes that earning the approval of significant others is a primary way to maintain and increase self-esteem.⁵⁴ In a stunning statement, Campbell writes, “Even those who seem most immune to any eagerness for social approval actually covet it - perhaps without being fully aware of their desire- as a gauge of their worth.”⁵⁵ This is a profound statement because it shows that someone can never truly stand on their own and know their worth.

Self-worth must come within relationship because even those who believe in their worth are in fact eager for social approval, according to Campbell. This contradicts and tempers McKay who writes, “True self-esteem is innate, undeniable, and independent of anyone's opinion... You just have it. The trick to handling criticism is not to let it make you forget your self-esteem.”⁵⁶ Perhaps McKay is only discussing results of self-esteem as opposed to the process of healing low self-worth. At least a relationship between therapist and client is helpful for healing within his own work, which reveals that community is at least a part of the healing process.

One way forward from these differences of opinions is to understand that self-worth comes from one's relationship with God, which excludes condemnation and possible rejection (Rom. 8:1). A person always has support and worth from God. This is

⁵⁴ Campbell, *The New Science*, 79.

⁵⁵ Campbell, *The New Science*, 77.

⁵⁶ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 188.

self-worth that is located in God and is undeniable. Campbell writes, “What can give a person a more secure and exalted self-esteem than to receive honor from the One who knows all and judges justly.”⁵⁷ However, it is still found in community (self and God) and is not something standing within an isolated self.

A danger that *ubuntu* may hold is locating self-worth within a human community as one learns and grows within the community. In order to combat this mistake, a nurturing community must not only be accepting and loving to the individual but must always encourage that individual in their relationship with God and reception of worth from God. A best practice as someone learns and grows in the concept of *ubuntu* and life in community is to balance it with the spiritual discipline of solitude. At times, an individual may be overbearing in their need for social approval, which means a community may need to place that individual before God. A good place for further work and research for this issue might include boundary keeping and Bowen’s family system theory (which includes differentiation) to assist and guide in that process.

New Finding – The Inner Critic

One new finding during the research into psychology’s perspective of self-esteem was the role of the inner critic, which can greatly affect one’s sense of self-worth. The inner critic is the inner thought patterns of a person that continually critiques and abuses self, giving way to an identity of being bad or wrong.⁵⁸ This inner critic can generalize situations in order to promote this feeling of wrongness. For example, the inner critic

⁵⁷ Campbell, *The New Science*, 58-59.

⁵⁸ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 7.

might critique self as “stupid” when in reality one simply may not understand the nature and implications of something at this time.

McKay suggests the first step in overcoming the inner critic is to identify the critical voice operating in self.⁵⁹ Second, the positive function of the critic must be revealed.⁶⁰ For example, calling self “stupid” or “slow” might be a motivator to work harder or move faster. Third, specific rebuttals for varying types of attacks from the inner critic must be formed.⁶¹ These rebuttals are specific in nature, but also contribute to the forming of a different identity.

Specifically in regard to self-worth, a healthy mantra and rebuttal to attacks from the inner critic that target either worth or competence, is the truth that “I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, and totally accepted by the God of the universe...” (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:8-10; 1 Jn 4:17).⁶² This may take a long time and an intentional habit to form and develop, but raising awareness of the inner critic was very helpful for the education of South Union on low self-worth.

Summary of Findings and Application to the Implemented Curriculum

The field of psychology and theory of self-esteem were crucial for the implemented curriculum and for supporting the findings in the other chapters. Major areas of intersection were addressed for each chapter. These are reviewed to summarize

⁵⁹ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 10.

⁶⁰ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 10.

⁶¹ McKay and Fanning, *Self-Esteem*, 10-13.

⁶² Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 97, 109-113.

the dialogue between the presented chapters and the field of psychology and the concept of self-esteem.

First, the definition of self-worth was reviewed, and a defense given for isolating self-worth from self-esteem and its component parts. It was agreed that self-worth is primarily concerned with self-evaluation. One difference was found in that Christian self-worth derives from self's evaluation lining up with God's evaluation of human worth, which innately gives healthy self-worth. This is opposed to evaluating one's self highly based on the integrated components of worth and competence for life.

Next, psychology was explored to find out if there was a connection between trauma and self-worth. This was found to generally be the case, with some qualifications and variances in studies within the psychology guild. The implemented curriculum was developed with an awareness of possible trauma in relation to self-worth and professional referrals were at the ready.

Third, psychology validated the importance of self-esteem and self-worth for living. Low self-worth is indeed a serious wound with varying effects on an individual's life. This matched the findings in the chapter two.

In discussion with chapter three, psychology and studies of self-esteem affirmed the need for realistic engagement with self in order to cultivate healthy self-worth. This confirmed the need for humility and the importance of humility as a sign for healing from low self-worth. Guilt was discussed, specifically subjective guilt. Guilt's relation to self-worth was noted, as was a way of handling guilt without it impacting one's self-worth. It was also confirmed that the VIM model engaged with can be of assistance in cultivating one's self-worth.

Next, forgiveness and community were dialogued with in relation to self-esteem theory within psychology. Forgiveness was found to be an important part of healing low self-worth even within secular psychology. However, the importance of community was different depending on the source. Many studies within self-esteem did not raise the issue of community at all. Some authors were at different perspectives regarding its importance for self-esteem. A harmonizing of views for the implemented curriculum was brought forward, so that it was found that community between self and God is always primary for healthy self-worth, while a surrounding community can assist and help an individual heal from low self-worth. Finally, the inner critic was quickly described as a new finding from the research of psychology.

Primarily, applications to implemented curriculum have already been made within the other chapters. One application that must be included under the research regarding humility is to accurately and realistically name strengths and positives of self, a person in pastoral discussions and or counseling, and within the church.⁶³ Without embellishment, this positive naming can be helpful to one's self worth. Noting God's deliverance, actions, and in particular God's love to each person is a critical practice.

This chapter confirms many arguments and applications found within the other chapters. Similar to findings within the field of psychology and theory of self-esteem, the previous arguments brought important points to the implemented curriculum. The fact that these previous findings were similar to findings within the field of psychology gives credence and weight to those findings, making this chapter a critical part of the whole.

⁶³ Willie Eugene Marshall, interview by author, January 2, 2019.

Conclusion

It has been known since the beginning that the field of psychology and the theory of self-esteem must be engaged with in order to have any weight or credence to the implemented curriculum. Not only that, but previous chapters were looking for validation from this field and theory, asking questions and looking for answers within it. This chapter has confirmed many points and answered many questions surrounding the findings of low self-worth in previous chapters. These findings and confirmations will help provide insight and weight as awareness of low self-worth occurs and as South Union and her pastor are positioned for healing from low self-worth by this project. Next, the analysis of the implemented curriculum is detailed.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The first chapter discussed the ministry context and my personal journey. At an intersection between the ministry context and my personal journey, this project, “Raising Awareness of Low Self-Worth and The Healing Love of God Among Frequent Church Attendees” was born. The next four chapters researched these two topics, low self-worth and the healing love of God, in order to appropriately address the need, which was to raise awareness of these issues. In this chapter, the project, an implemented curriculum raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God, is analyzed.

Introduction

In the first chapter, the conclusion stated that there was an intersecting problem found in the ministry context and me: low self-worth. It was stated that an intimate relational knowledge of God’s love in Christ Jesus is the place where true self-worth can be found. Wrapped in Jesus’ love, full self-acceptance (one aspect of humility) could also be reached. From this place, healing could be received.

It was decided with the help of context associates that the first step was to raise awareness of two things: low self-worth and the healing love of God. This became the theme and focus of the four foundational chapters that followed. The hypothesis for this

project was that if the curriculum developed from the foundation chapters was implemented, then South Union may better understand self-worth.

As a reminder, a quick overview of each chapter is provided here. Chapter two explored low self-worth in the life of Gideon. By analyzing Gideon, the following three things were shown: some possible causes of low self-worth, the severe effects of low self-worth, and some potential places God sought to heal Gideon from low self-worth. Chapter three analyzed the early years of John Woolman's life. This chapter showed another potential cause of low self-worth and elaborated on a potential methodology for being positioned for healing from low self-worth by the love of God. The fourth chapter explored *Ubuntu* from a Christian perspective and *imago dei* in order to find points of healing from low self-worth. It detailed important concepts such as finding one's worth in God, being positioned within community for healing, being a supporter of healing another, and the crucial role forgiveness plays in being positioned from low self-worth. Finally, chapter five sought to further illuminate the above listed findings in the field of psychology. Another helpful concept was also found, which was the concept of the inner critic and its role in low self-worth.

Several topics became crucial throughout the writing of the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary chapters. The first topic was the definition of low self-worth, specifically defining it through a Christian lens. Two companion pieces were then brought alongside in order to define low self-worth: the evaluation of self from God's perspective and concept of humility. The evaluation of self from God's perspective included seeing self as a child of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Humility was defined to be facing reality about God, self, and others.

The second topic that came to the forefront from the foundation chapters was the severity of low self-worth. It was seen and shown how severe the effects of low self-worth could be in the life of Gideon. In contrast to Gideon, John Woolman was shown to have a great deal of healing in his life with profound outcomes because he was healed from low self-worth.

Third, the relationship between trauma and low self-worth was noted as a possible finding and was linked within the foundation chapters. An emphasis on community for the importance of healing was also drawn out. So, forgiveness and a model for forgiveness became a crucial aspect in order to help heal trauma and in order to help live in healthy community. Forgiveness was one way to be positioned before God from healing from low self-worth and a way to live in healthy community.

Fourth, the concept of the ideal self was drawn out in order to provide a way to position self for healing, or help others be positioned for healing, from low self-worth. This concept of the ‘ideal self’ became important because it could be one potential cause of low self-worth, but it also has a role to play in healing from low self-worth as a “vision” in the VIM model (vision, intention, means). Attached to this concept is also the idea of the “inner critic” which can be one contributor to low self-worth and a blocker to being healed from low self-worth.

Finally, the VIM model was illustrated in the life of John Woolman. It became a foundational method for helping people understand how to be positioned from low self-worth. It required a realistic ideal self (vision), the resolve to move into that vision (intention), and basic action steps in order to get there (means). This was an important

part of helping people be positioned before God for healing from low self-worth or helping others heal from low self-worth.

The final project and document are a direct result from the research that has been done. The clear theme of every chapter and the project has been an investigation into low self-worth, including looking for ways to be positioned for healing by the love of God. The research for the foundational chapters had clear connections in their approach to learning about low self-worth, each one building on the previous one.

The Doctor of Ministry project, in seeking to raise awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God, sought to teach the most critical points in each foundation chapter within a six-week time period. Within the project context of South Union Mennonite Church, a curriculum was proposed as the best method of communicating this information in order to raise awareness. Three specific elements were included to best accomplish this goal. The first two elements included Sunday School lectures and sermons during the normal worship period. The intent behind utilizing these two methods was to best reach the target audience, which were frequent church attendees. By using times and activities that were familiar and typically attended, it was hoped that there would be fewer scheduling conflicts and more participation. The third element was a pastoral discussion, which was a time of personal reflection and conversation with me, the project implementor, about the given topics of low self-worth, the healing love of God, the curriculum, and application to their own life (if the conversation was led in that direction).

In the methodology and implementation sections, the curriculum will be fully described. It will be clearly seen how the research during the Doctor of Ministry program

directly impacted the curriculum due to a near one to one correlation of topics and teaching material.

Methodology

This project was a qualitative study, most closely matching a case study. The project itself was the implementation and evaluation of the developed curriculum about raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God among frequent church attendees at South Union Mennonite Church. Four measurable goals were proposed for the curriculum in order to guide the meaning of what “raising awareness” meant. First, the learner would be able to know the definition of low self-worth. Second, the learner would know some signs of low self-worth. Third, the learner would know some ways to be positioned or to help position another for healing that may come through the love of God. Fourth, the learner would articulate a belief concerning the severity of low self-worth. Data gathering means were used with the intent of evaluating the curriculum’s effectiveness in assisting subjects to reach these four goals.

The first measurement used for the curriculum was a pre and post survey. This pre-post survey featured questions addressing each learner goal. Assessment of the curriculum’s effectiveness could then be made based on the subjects’ overall growth in knowledge for each of the learner goals from the standpoint of before and after the curriculum. It is believed this was one of the most effective tools for measuring the real impact of the curriculum on the subjects because it calculated what the curriculum as a whole accomplished for the subjects.

The pre-survey was administered before the project time period. It was first handed out approximately one month before the curriculum began along with an implied consent letter. This pre-survey could be completed at any point up to the first day of the curriculum. However, it was recommended that subjects hand the pre-survey in by the time of the consent form general session. One key aspect to this survey, and all the surveys and written questionnaires, was the request that the subject not use any learning aids while filling them out in order to obtain a real data sampling of what a subject knew at the time of responding.

The post-survey was handed out on the final day of the curriculum, which was week six. Special instructions were given to finish it as soon as possible and return it to me within one week. This enabled people to have time to respond well to the survey while pressing subjects to report what they now knew before too much time elapsed. This was to be done without any learning aids.

The second tool used was a check for understanding after the Sunday school class and after the sermon. This tool was important for measuring subject progress in obtaining the learner goals throughout the curriculum. It also gave a means for measuring the effectiveness of each Sunday school class and sermon within the curriculum by having questions targeted each session, specifically. This tool also provided a way for written reflection for the subject. Finally, this tool gave a way for subjects to state their experiences in each class and sermon. The Sunday school check for understanding will be explained first.

The Sunday school check for understanding looked to measure subject progress throughout the six-week curriculum for two specific learner goals. First, it sought to

measure understanding about the definition of low self-worth. (learner goal number one). Second, it sought to measure understanding about signs of low self-worth (learner goal number two). Data was also collected to measure the general effectiveness of each individual lesson based on the understanding subjects gained for that particular piece of the curriculum. For example, during the first Sunday school session, the signs and effects of low self-worth in Gideon's life were overviewed. Specific questions regarding this overview were then asked on the first Sunday school check for understanding. Finally, a general question regarding the experience of the subjects during the Sunday school class was given.

The sermon check for understanding used the same initial questions found in the Sunday school check for understanding. These questions sought to continue to measure learner goals one and two. It also sought to measure the general effectiveness of both the sermon and the Sunday school class by asking subjects to state what they learned that was different between the two activities and by asking subjects to state what was most helpful that was repeated in both activities.

The sermon check for understanding also sought to measure learner goal four by asking about the subject's belief regarding the severity of low self-worth and if that belief had changed any since the beginning of the curriculum.

Both the sermon and Sunday school checks for understanding measured learner goal three, which was that the learner would know some ways to be positioned or to help position another for healing that will come through the love of God. This goal was measured during the specific sessions which articulated ways of being healed, mainly during weeks three through six.

Each week, the checks for understanding were handed out prior to the Sunday school class and sermon time with a clipboard. Each survey gave clear, written instructions not to use any learning aids with the survey. The intent was for subjects to fill out the checks for understanding immediately after the associated activity. Human subject research suggested that subjects be allowed to opt-out of these checks for understanding by checking a box for their surveys to be destroyed. This was included on each check for understanding and was used by a few subjects.

Finally, a post-discussion interview was used to measure learner progress and experience during the pastoral discussion. This interview gave a measured 'snapshot' of the subject's current movement towards or obtainment of each learner goal. Questions were specifically asked to measure each learner goal one through four. This tool was used because it was a way to measure learner goal progress after the pastoral discussion. This interview also continued the personal nature of the discussion, which created a smooth transition for the subject, instead of handing out of an additional survey for the subject to fill out.

There were several variables for analyzing the data that are not accounted for. Some of these variables include past familiarity with low self-worth, level of education, comfort with lectures, learning styles, and age. The reason for not gathering this data was to place the emphasis of analysis on the curriculum instead of on the subject. Emphasizing the subject would have intimidated subjects who were concerned the project was going to be like school. This was a genuine fear for subjects. Therefore, data that would have intimidated subjects were not requested.

The curriculum I developed in order to raise awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God among frequent church attendees engaged learners on three levels in order to help subjects meet the learner goals: Sunday school, sermons, and a pastoral discussion. The Sunday school class and sermons will be explained first, followed by the pastoral discussion.

Three major components of the Sunday school class and sermons must be elaborated on: the original intent and deviations from the project proposal, the final curriculum, and the distribution of surveys. The original intent behind the Sunday school class and the sermons was to do a deep dive on a subject during Sunday school first, followed by a more pointed, specific overview during the sermon in the worship service in order to help subjects retain the main, repeated points within both. This method would also allow for small deviations based on class questions during Sunday school, while the sermon repeated main points so that frequent worshippers who were not subjects in the curriculum would not feel lost.

While several Sundays during the curriculum time period were able to successfully follow this original intent of repetition, changes after the first week of the curriculum had to be made. These changes resulted in three Sundays having different topics during the Sunday school and sermon time. The reason for this change was an overestimation of how much material could successfully be taught in Sunday school. Too much information can unintentionally block subjects from their learning goals. Therefore, in order to best assist subjects pursuing the learning goals, a revision of the curriculum took place in order to trim topics down to the most critical and essential components that would help subjects meet the learning goals. Some of these critical components then

required being taught in two distinct Sunday school classes, instead of being taught in a single class. This displaced other curriculum material that would have enabled a repetition of material between Sunday school and the sermons.

Sunday school was primarily didactic, driven by lecture, with group discussion questions and verbal checks for understanding mixed in. Subjects were invited to respond, ask questions, make comments, and elaborate on their understanding of the material. Lectures were not from manuscripts but utilized a handout and PowerPoint to guide the presentation (more on these means below).

The sermon was delivered in my normal preaching style. It sought to reach subjects and non-subjects with the material presented but was also driven by the carefully selected scripture passage for that day. These sermons were written as manuscripts but preaching primarily happened off the sermon handout and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

There were several ways in which learning was potentially enhanced for subjects during the Sunday school and sermon lessons. Printed handouts with an overview of each Sunday school class and sermons were made available for every subject. The Sunday school class also utilized a PowerPoint presentation with pictures in order to enhance learning.

Subjects were able to participate in person or online as frequent attendees. This gave the most subjects the most opportunity to participate in the project. Emails were sent with instructions, links to online uploads, handouts, and the checks for understanding for those who desired to participate online. Sunday school sessions and sermons were posted online on Vimeo.

The third element of the curriculum was the pastoral discussions, which were scheduled with every subject. I requested an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes from each subject. One hour was to be given for the discussion, while fifteen minutes was to be allotted for the post-discussion interview. Every discussion utilized a common series of conversation starters concerning the four learning goals and the curriculum.

The pastoral discussions were scheduled throughout the latter half of the six-week curriculum. The intent was to give subjects some time to reflect, ask questions, and explore the topics of low self-worth and the healing love of God in a less formal setting. The earliest discussion was scheduled during the third week of the curriculum due to the subject's schedule. The remainder of the pastoral discussions were scheduled between the fourth and sixth weeks of the curriculum.

The pastoral discussion was an informal time to discuss curriculum material, the subjects' thoughts on different aspects of the curriculum, and pointed discussion around topics driving at the different learner goals. This discussion also allowed subjects to reflect with me about applying curriculum material to their lives, if the subject steered the conversation in that direction.

Implementation

The finalized implemented curriculum for the Sunday school and sermon topics each contained essential elements and components found in the foundation chapters. In week one, the first Sunday school class overviewed the life of Gideon in Judges chapters six through eight, with a specific focus on Judges 6:11-13. This class introduced the definition of low self-worth, the signs of low self-worth and how they appeared in

Gideon's life, God's desire to heal Gideon from low self-worth for his purposes, and the severe effects of low self-worth on Gideon and those around him. The sermon matched this theme, focusing on Judges 6:11-24, but simply overviewing the case for low self-worth in Gideon's life instead of going in-depth. The sermon defined low self-worth, mentioned signs and where they were seen in Gideon's life, showed the severity of low self-worth in Gideon's actions in Judges chapter eight, and related low self-worth to the current context through a reflection question. Both of these sessions sought to instruct subjects on learning goals one, two, and four.

In the second week, during the second Sunday school class, the definition of low self-worth was reviewed. The characterization of being critical was the focus sign of low self-worth. Being critical, of self and others, was elaborated on from John Woolman's journal and used to help inform the teaching on guilt and shame. One potential cause of low self-worth, seen in connection with John Woolman's life, was guilt and shame. These two things were defined and elaborated on. Finally, steps for healing from guilt and shame were overviewed, along with the difference between conviction and condemnation. During the sermon, the topic matched the Sunday school class. It defined low self-worth, guilt, shame, and delivered a way to be healed from shame and, in part, from low self-worth by the healing love of God. In both of these, learning goals one, two, three, and four were touched on.

During the third week of Sunday School, the concept of *ubuntu* theology was introduced, along with the necessary companion idea of community and the compared idea of *imago dei*. The connection between a human's worth found in God and the importance of being in community as a means to be positioned for healing, and as result

of healing, was detailed. It was also noted and taught that a person with low self-worth struggles with community due to the signs of feeling unlovable, feeling isolated, and being angry at oneself and or at others but afraid of causing someone else anger.

Primarily, learning goal three was targeted during this session.

The sermon for the third week was connected to the Sunday school class but focused primarily on a healthy sense of self-worth that was rooted in God and in an understanding of *imago dei*. The sermon discussed a healthy sense of self-worth that correlates with humility, God's evaluation of a human, being made in the image of God, the issue with reliance on self-confidence and performance, and God's love for humans on the basis of their existence. Learning goal three was a primary target during this session.

The first pastoral discussion occurred during this week due to the subject's schedule. At this point, this subject had enough information for a conversation around the topics of low self-worth and the healing love of God.

The Vision, Intention, Means (VIM) model of being positioned for healing by God from low self-worth was detailed in the fourth week of Sunday School. Examples of each were given from the life of John Woolman. The sermon matched the subject of the Sunday school class and re-iterated many of the same points, without the examples from John Woolman. Learning goal three was a primary target during this class, although learning goals one and two were reviewed. Nine pastoral discussions were scheduled during this week.

During the fifth week of Sunday school, a single insight from chapter five was taught in detail: the inner critic. Specifically, the inner critic as a sign of low self-worth

and as a potential contributing cause to low self-worth was noted. Not only was the inner critic taught on, but steps to be positioned for healing and combating the inner critic were also taught. Learning goals one, two, three, and four were all targeted in this class.

The sermon had more content than the Sunday school for this session. The sermon targeted three chains enslaving humans to low self-worth: the chain of reliance on self or humans (broken by going to God), the chain of false or fleshly thinking (broken by the renewing of the mind), and the chain of unforgiveness (broken by forgiving). Learning goals two and three were targeted during this session. Eight pastoral discussions were scheduled this week.

Finally, in the sixth week of Sunday school, forgiveness was taught on, specifically the fourfold path developed by Tutu and Tutu and elaborated on as a part of *ubuntu* theology. This class also taught on the importance of forgiveness as a part of being positioned for healing from low self-worth, since one of the potential causes of low self-worth is trauma. Primarily, learning goal three was targeted during this session.

The sermon for week six was again different than the Sunday school class. The goal of this sermon was to show a path forward for the community, whether individuals had low self-worth or were encouraging others toward healing from low self-worth. Topics included the ability to trust God because God values humanity, the challenge to see others from God's perspective, and God's ultimate purpose for humans. Learning goal three was the primary target during this session. The final two subjects were scheduled for their pastoral discussion this week.

A great deal was learned during the project period and from analyzing the data in order to evaluate the curriculum. In the next section, a summarization of data and learnings will be given, specifically targeting the learner goals.

Summary of Learning

Objective

The summary of learning will be broken into three sections. First, it will address the possible effectiveness of the curriculum through data from surveys and the pastoral discussion post-interviews. This will include objective measures of the data and some suggestions for interpreting the effectiveness of the curriculum. Second, subjects' subjective experiences will be recorded in a general, short-hand overview of the data collected. Third, my personal learnings will be recorded.

In analyzing what subjects may have learned, observations will be made concerning the recorded data that speaks about the progress learners made toward the learner goals. The first learner goal for this curriculum was to know the definition of low self-worth. The initial number of subjects taking part in the curriculum, and therefore the pre-survey, was twenty-three. Three subjects (approx. thirteen percent) of the respondents could define low self-worth fairly close to the definition that was taught in the curriculum. Fourteen subjects (approx. sixty percent) of the respondents had a general sort of idea expressed in their definition of low self-worth. Four subjects (approx. seventeen percent) of the subjects were unable to define low self-worth. Two subjects left their survey blank.

Some of the pre-survey responses are paraphrased here, one response for each category. One close definition was, “It is the value put on self that is lower than one’s actual worth.” Two responses with a general idea was, “a low opinion of self” and “feeling inadequate.” One response that is unable to define low self-worth was, “could be depressed, series of bad days.” These responses were examples of what was received.

In order to observe the greatest growth, the post-survey’s are reviewed next, specifically regarding the first learner goal. The final number of subjects taking part in the curriculum was twenty-one. Please note this change when comparing percentages. Second, it was expected that subjects should be able to define low self-worth with exactness of meaning at this point. Nine subjects were able to define low self-worth exactly (approx. forty-two percent). Seven subjects were able to closely define low self-worth, though without the exact meaning intact (thirty-three percent). Five subjects were unable to successfully define low self-worth (twenty-three percent). No surveys were returned blank or missing.

In observing the data, the major hindrance for those learners unable to meet the learner goal was to confuse the signs of low self-worth with the exact definition of low self-worth. Some also reversed the curriculum-taught method of being healed from low self-worth with the definition of low self-worth. Subjects who were unable to closely define low self-worth usually were not far off but forgot to include a word (such as “low” or “negative” in “assigning one’s self a negative value”). Others confused a propositional statement with an attitude, which is not entirely correct.

On the positive side, the data suggests that at the time of the post-survey, approximately three times as many subjects were able to define low self-worth correctly

than during the pre-survey. An example of a definition with exactness included, “assigning self a negative value.” An example of one that closely, but not exactly, defined low self-worth included “thinking of myself with negative value.” An example of an answer unable to define low self-worth included “lack of trust and relationship with God.” These were some examples of what was received on the post-survey.

The weekly checks for understanding help to reveal the effectiveness of the sessions in leading subjects to the learner goals. During week one, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, two subjects (approx. 8%) articulated the definition of low self-worth exactly, thirteen subjects closely defined low self-worth (approx. 56%), and eight (approx. 34%) were unable to articulate the definition correctly. General problems with articulating definitions included those mentioned above, specifically confusing signs of low self-worth with the definition thereof, or forgetting critical words in the definition, or confusing the definition with an attitude of some sort. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “Assigning one self a negative value,” from the close category, “incorrect evaluation of one’s self” and “self-loathing, feeling as if one is not ‘good enough,’” and from the unable category “feeling unloved, not heard, invisible, feeling rejected.”

At the time of the sermon check for understanding, three subjects articulated the definition of low self-worth exactly (approx. 13%). Ten subjects closely defined low self-worth (approx. 43%) and ten subjects were unable to define low self-worth (approx. 43%). From this data, it seems between the time of the Sunday school check for understanding and the sermon check for understanding, one subject was able to more exactly define low self-worth, while two subjects became less able to define low self-

worth. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “Assigning oneself a negative value,” from the close category, “a feeling of one’s self value – low value” and from the unable category “feeling worthless.”

Below is a chart summarizing the data from week one for learner goal one.

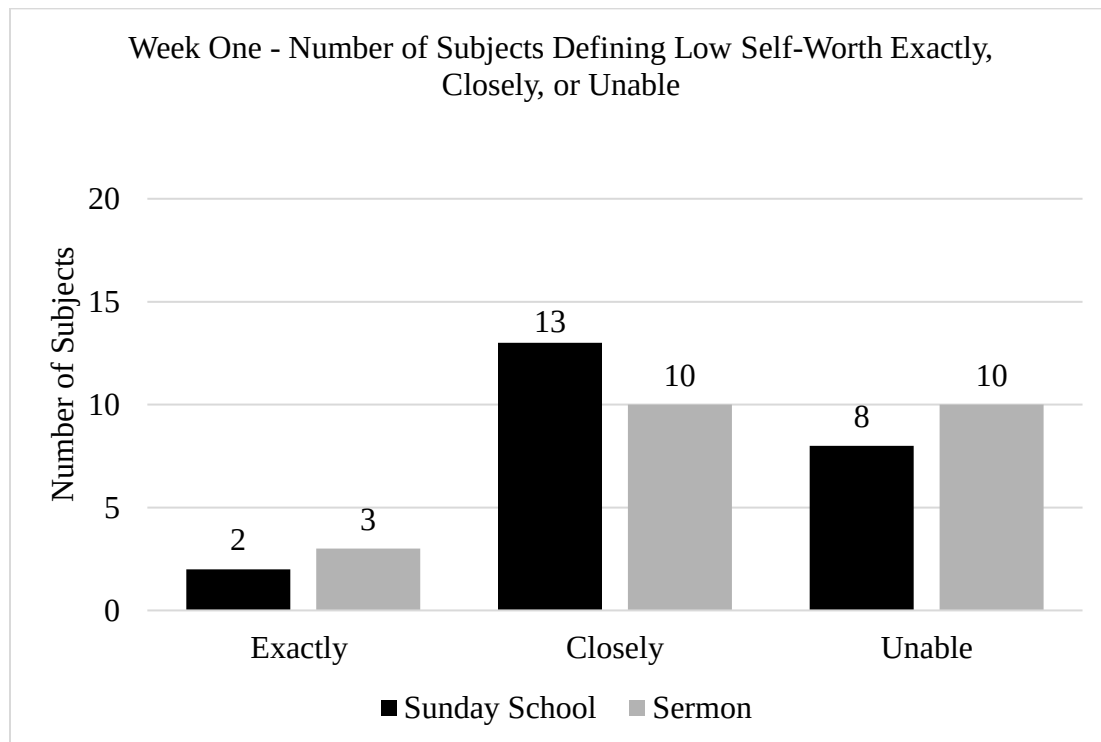


Figure 1. Week one: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

During week two, one subject dropped from the curriculum. At the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, four subjects exactly defined low self-worth (approx. 18%), fourteen subjects closely defined low self-worth (approx. 63%), and three subjects were unable to define low self-worth (approx. 13%). One survey was checked to be destroyed, which means the subject opted out of this particular survey. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “low evaluation of one’s worth,” from the close category, “a low value of one’s self” and from the unable category “feeling really bad about one’s self.”

At the time of the sermon check for understanding, four subjects exactly defined low self-worth (approx. 18%), ten subjects closely defined it (approx. 45%), and eight subjects were unable to define it (approx. 36%). Here, it is interesting to observe that less individuals were able to closely define low self-worth after the sermon than the Sunday school class. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “giving one’s self a negative value,” from the close category, “when one evaluates him or herself negatively” and from the unable category “sin and guilt.”

Below is a chart summarizing the data from week two for learner goal one.

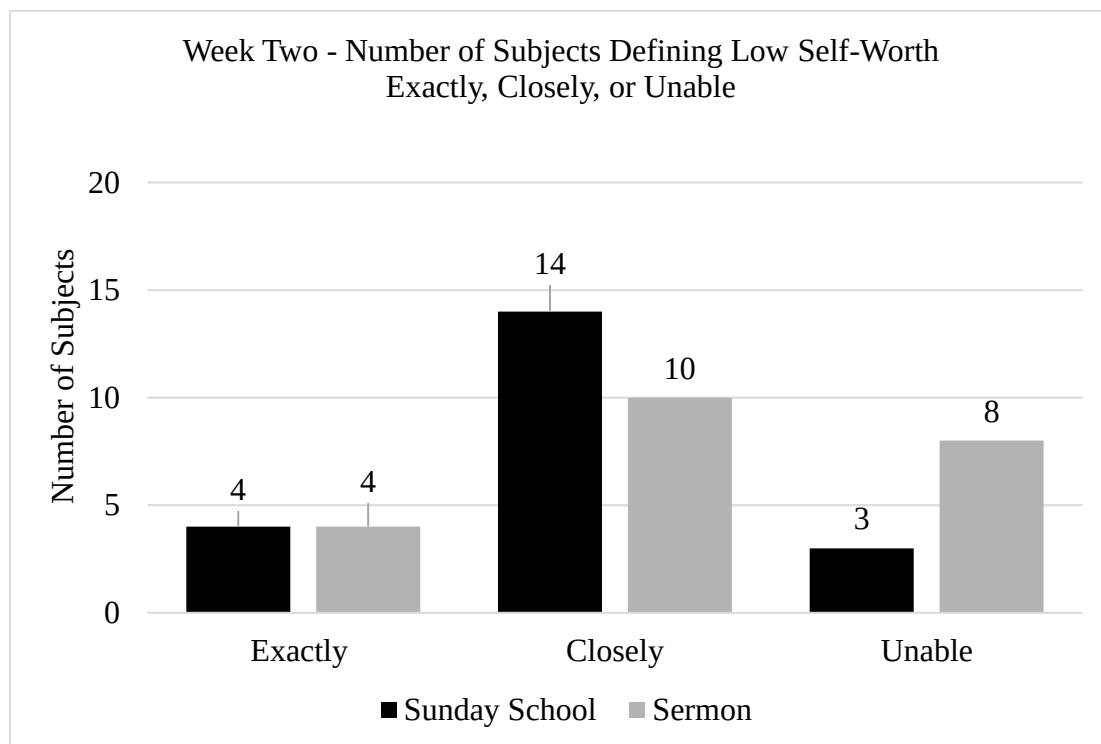


Figure 2. Week two: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

In week three, at the time of the Sunday School check for understanding, eleven subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 50%), three closely defined it (approx. 13%), and five were unable to do so (approx. 22%). One survey was not returned, and one survey was checked to be destroyed, indicating one subject opted out of

the survey. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “a negative assessment of one’s value,” from the close category, “having a negative opinion of self” and from the unable category “to look at self from the world’s point of view instead of God’s point of view.”

At the time of the sermon check for understanding, seven subjects correctly defined low self-worth (approx. 31%), four subjects closely defined low self-worth (approx. 18%), and ten were unable to correctly define low self-worth (approx. 45%). One survey was not returned. The observation can be made that after the check for understanding during the third Sunday school session, seven more subjects than the previous week were able to correctly define low self-worth. However, it is observed that after the sermon, fewer subjects were able to correctly define low self-worth. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “a negative appraisal of one’s self,” from the close category, “thinking negative of self” and from the unable category “false humility, pride, arrogance” and “shame, guilt, not belonging, unloved, anger.”

Below is a chart that summarizes the data from week three for learner goal one.

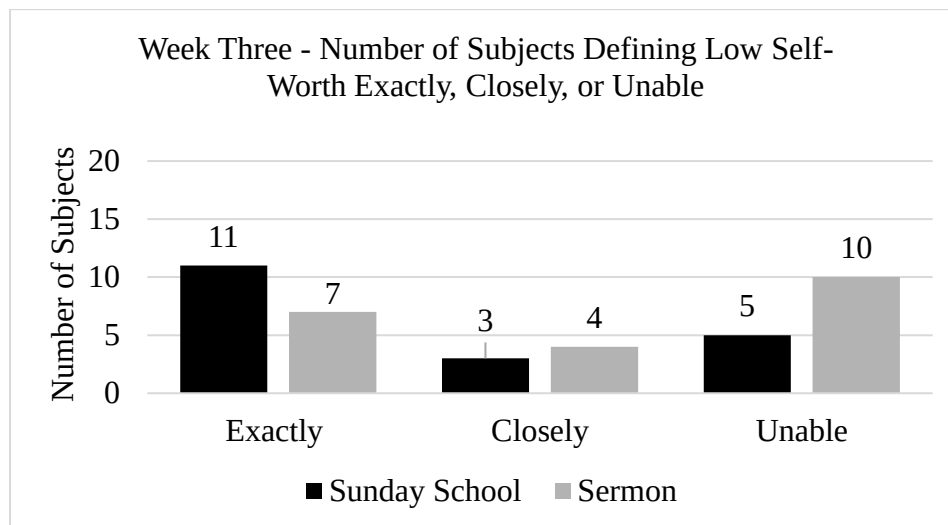


Figure 3. Week three: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

Based on the data from the first three weeks, specifically the increase in subjects who were unable to define low self-worth after the sermon, a suggestion can be put forward that the sermons generally created confusion for subjects. Subjects became less able, instead of more able, to correctly define low self-worth. This goes against the intentional structuring of the curriculum, where the sermon was supposed to enhance people's understanding of primary points in the curriculum.

During week four, a second subject dropped from the experiment. At the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, ten subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 47%), six subjects closely defined it (approx. 28%), and four subjects were unable to define it correctly (approx. 19%). One survey was not returned. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, "assigning self a negative value," from the close category, "describing self in the negative" and "seeing self in a negative way," and from the unable category "feeling weak."

After the sermon check for understanding, four subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 19%), six closely defined low self-worth (approx. 28%), and nine were unable to define low self-worth (approx. 42%). One survey was checked to be destroyed, indicating the subject opted out of this particular survey, and one survey was not returned. At this point, fewer subjects correctly defining low self-worth is expected and supports the above-mentioned suggestion that the sermon hinders subjects' ability to complete learner goal one instead of enhancing it. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, "evaluating one's self and assigning a negative value," from the close category, "a negative vision of self and a belief that one's worth is less than those around them," and from the unable category "not loving self as God loves me."

Below is a chart that summarizes data from week four for learner goal one.

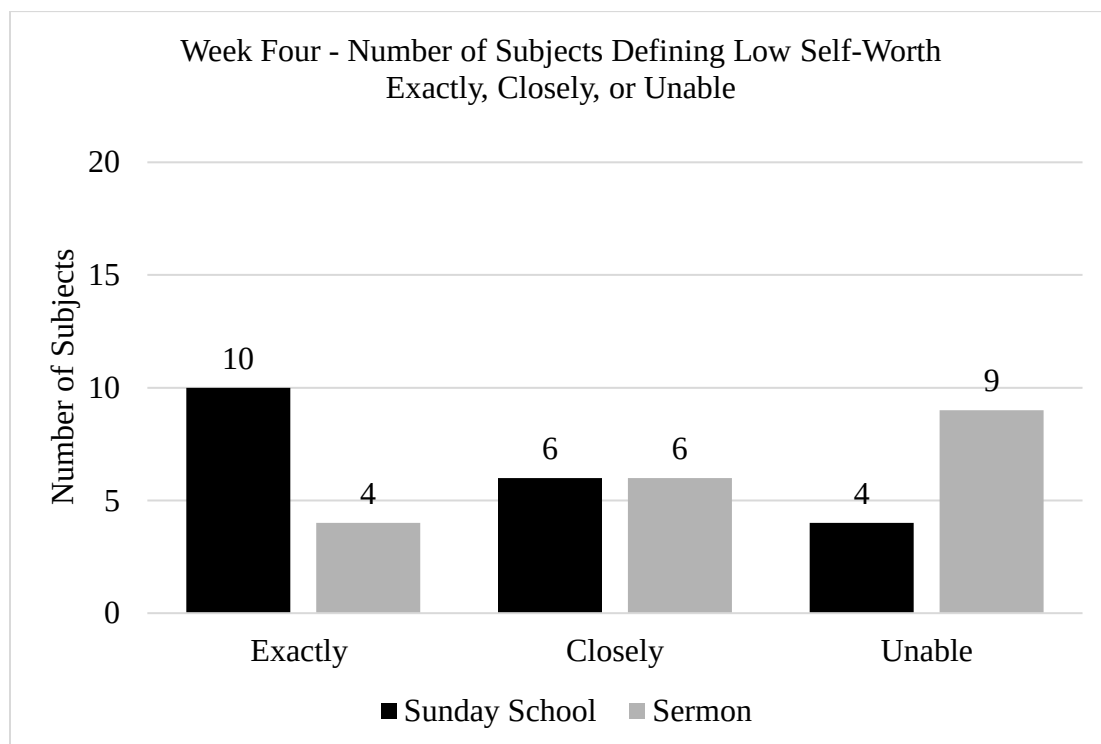


Figure 4. Week four: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

During week five, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, eight subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 38%), eight subjects closely defined it (approx. 38%), and three subjects were unable to define low self-worth (approx. 14%). Two surveys were not returned. The move for two subjects from an exact week four definition to a close week five definition was the forgetting of a single word (“negative” or “low”). Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “assigning self a negative value,” from the close category, “feelings of inadequacy, can never do things the ‘right’ way,” and from the unable category “not feeling valuable in comparison with others, jealousy.”

After the sermon check for understanding, six subjects exactly defined low self-worth (approx. 28%), five closely defined it (approx. 23%), and eight subjects were unable to define it (38%). Two surveys were not returned. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “assessing one’s self with a negative or critical self-worth,” from the close category, “negative attitude of self-worth,” and from the unable category “questioning your value in God’s eyes” and “believing what Satan tells me about myself.”

Below is a chart summarizing the data from week five for learner goal one.

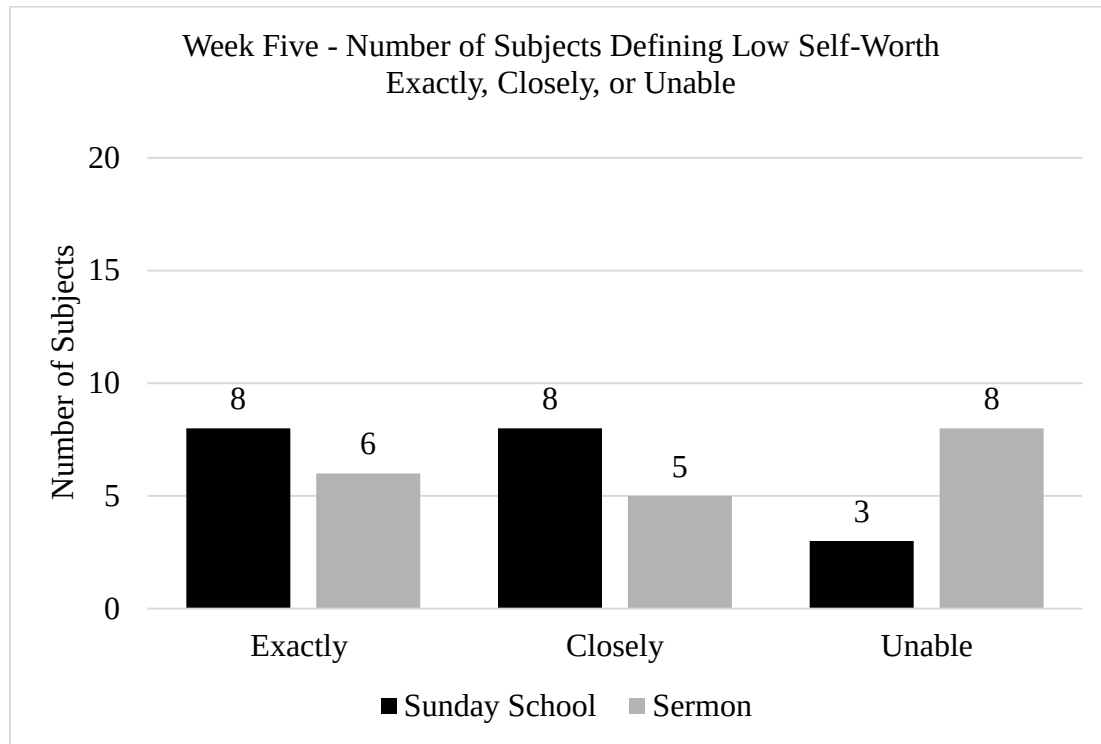


Figure 5. Week five: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

This data trend continues to support the suggestion that the sermons hinder subjects from meeting learner goal one.

At the time of the week six check for understanding, nine subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 42%), seven subjects were able to closely define it (approx. 33%), and four subjects were unable to define it (approx. 19%). One survey was checked to be destroyed, indicating one subject opted out of the survey. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “low evaluation of one’s worth,” from the close category, “thinking negative of self,” and from the unable category “keep to yourself, depressed, low self-value.”

At the time of the sermon check for understanding, ten subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth (approx. 47%), two subjects closely defined low self-worth

(approx. 9%), and four subjects were unable to define low self-worth (approx. 19%). One survey was checked to be destroyed, indicating one subject opted out of the survey, while one survey was not returned. Example responses from each category include, from the exact category, “placing a negative value on self,” from the close category, “the negative reflection of one’s self,” and from the unable category “devalue of one’s importance to themselves, others, and God.”

Below is a summary chart of the week six learner for goal one data.

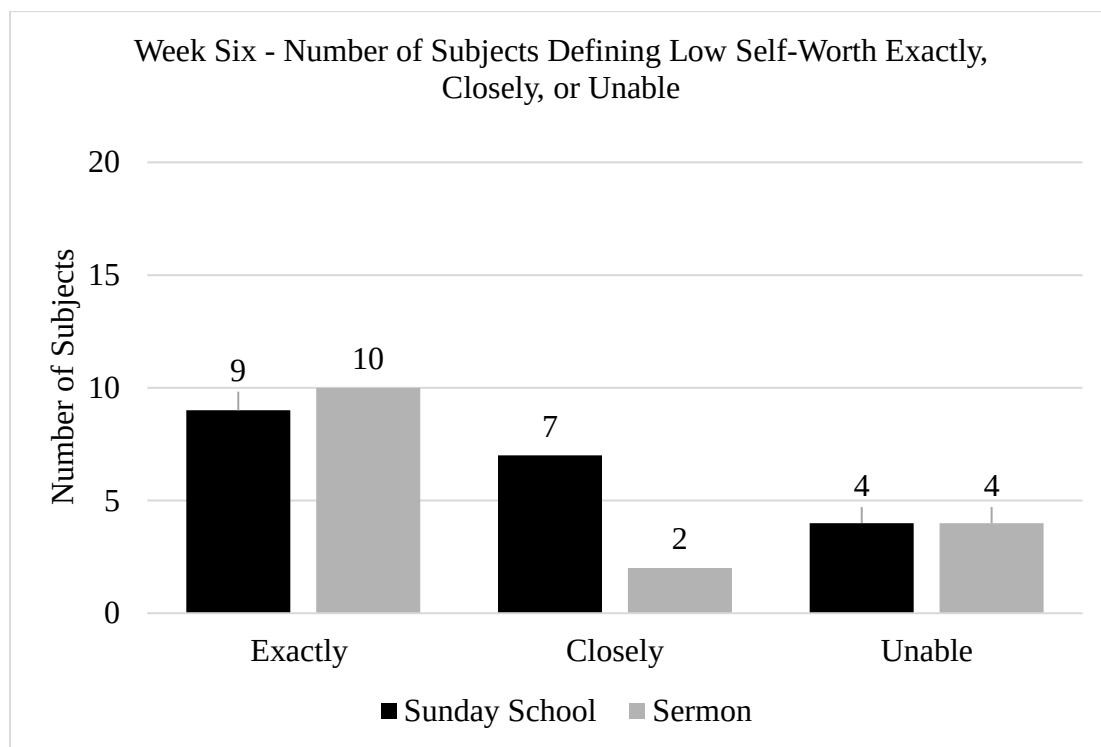


Figure 6. Week six: Number of subjects defining low self-worth exactly, closely, or unable

One interesting observation here is that at the time of the sermon check for understanding, more subjects were able to exactly define low self-worth than at the time of the Sunday School check for understanding. This is the only week that breaks the suggestion that the sermon hindered subjects from obtaining learner goal number one. No definite conclusions can be made, as the sermon content may have been at issue and not

necessarily the formula of using a Sunday school – sermon approach for a curriculum to be at fault. However, this is certainly a direction for further exploration in curriculum development for frequent church attendees. Next, the observation can be made that the ending results for week six are just about the results recorded on the post-survey.

The visual below will help to quickly track subjects' progression towards learner's goal one. It measures the number of people who are able to define low self-worth with exactness from week one to the post-survey. Specifically, it shows the data from the checks for understanding after the Sunday School class and after the sermon.

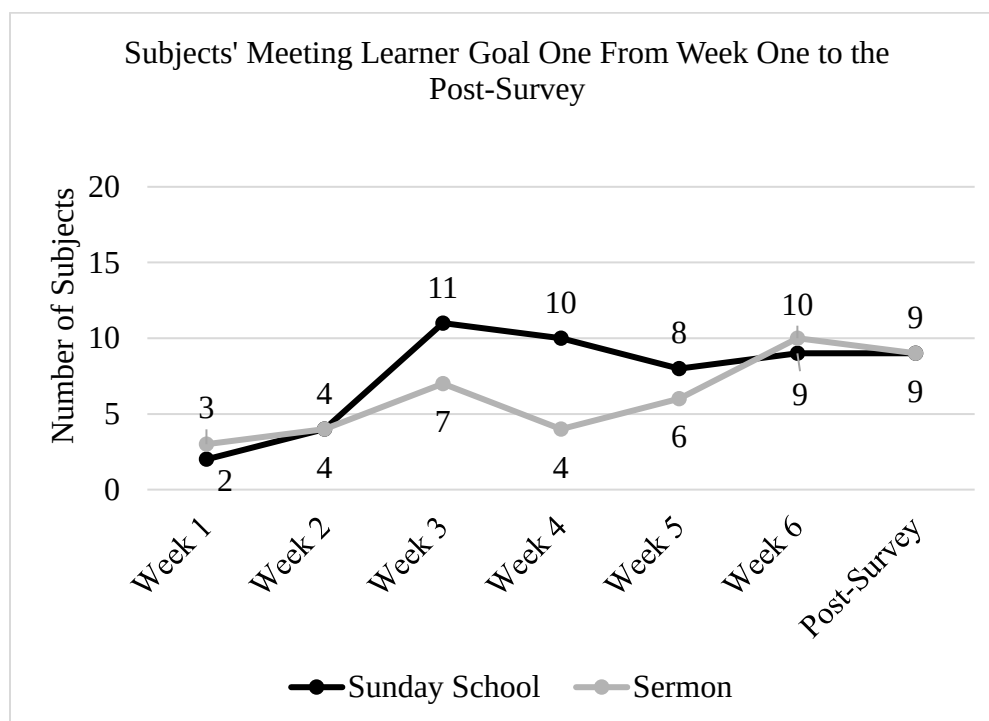


Figure 7. Subjects' meeting learner goal one from week one to the post-survey

It is difficult to draw conclusions from this data regarding the flow of the curriculum. Since the definition of low self-worth was reviewed every week at the beginning of the Sunday school sessions, there seems to be no logical reason why the number of subjects correctly defining low self-worth would jump between weeks two and

three, then taper off between weeks four and six. Similarly, the sermons seem to reveal little reason why some subjects responded correctly during week six rather than other weeks.

After the pastoral discussion, at the time of the pastoral discussion post-interview, seven subjects were able to correctly define low self-worth, seven subjects closely defined it, and seven subjects were unable to define it correctly (approx. 33% for each category). Noting that the majority of pastoral discussions occurred during weeks four and five (after that weeks' Sunday school and sermon); it may be hypothesized that the pastoral discussion was less effective than other elements in the curriculum, as more subjects were less able to correctly define low self-worth after the pastoral discussion than after the Sunday school or sermon sessions.

The second learner goal was for subjects to know some signs of low self-worth. There was not a specific number needed to meet the learner goal, but "signs" is pluralized, indicating more than one sign was expected to be known. During the pre-survey, six subjects identified two signs correctly (approx. 26%). Another six subjects identified one sign correctly (approx. 26%). Nine subjects were unable to correctly identify any signs of low self-worth (approx. 39%). Two surveys were blank. This indicates that from the start, six subjects met the learner goal.

During the post-survey, subjects were expected to know signs of low self-worth with some exactness. It is observed that during the post-survey, six subjects were able to list five or more signs of low self-worth (approx. 28%). Two subjects correctly identified four signs (approx. 9%). Three subjects were able to list three signs of low self-worth (approx. 14%). Three subjects were able to identify two signs of low self-worth (approx.

14%). Four subjects successfully identified one sign of low self-worth (approx. 19%). Two subjects were unable to correctly identify signs of low self-worth (approx. 9%).

In observing the data, six subjects were unable to meet learner goal two (approx. 28%). Of these six, several showed signs of confusion around some of the signs. Overall, several signs were frequently confused, including in this group. One primary example includes confusion around the correct sign, which was “feels isolated and unlovable,” with “isolated” or “desires to be by one’s self.” Unfortunately, the revision of the original sign has a different intended meaning and is therefore incorrect. A second primary example involved the correct sign, which was “be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.” Ten subjects shortened or misunderstood this sign to be “anger,” which is very different than the correct sign (approx. 47%). Positively, fourteen subjects were able to correctly identify two or more signs of low self-worth at the writing of the post-survey (approx. 66%). This is an increase of eight subjects from the pre-survey.

Throughout the six weeks, data can be observed which seems to throw a bit of a wrench in the suggestion stated above, namely that the sermon does not assist subjects in reaching the learner goal. In week one, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, four subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 17%). One subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), one subject correctly identified three signs (approx. 4%), and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 21%). At the time of the sermon check for understanding, five subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 21%). Zero subjects identified four signs correctly, one subject

identified three signs correctly (approx. 4%), and four subjects identified two signs correctly (approx. 17%).

Below is a chart that summarizes the data for week one learner goal two.

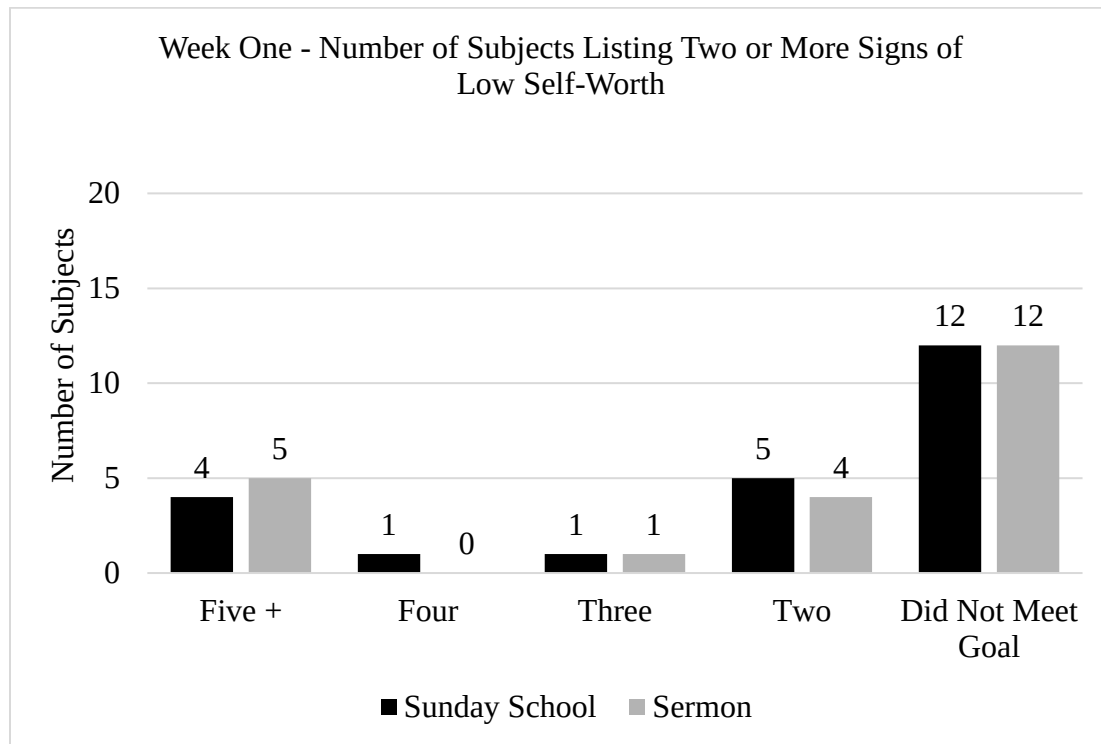


Figure 8. Week one: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

From this data, some small shifts in either direction (identifying more signs or less signs) in those subjects who generally met the learner goal during week one can be observed. However, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, eleven subjects met learner goal number two (approx. 47%), identifying two or more signs of low self-worth correctly, while at the time of the sermon check for understanding only ten subjects met learner goal number two (approx. 43%).

In week two, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, only one subject correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 4%). Two subjects correctly identified four signs (approx. 9%), two subjects identified three signs (approx. 9%), and

seven subjects identified two signs (approx. 31%). At the time of the sermon check for understanding, three subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 13%), one subject identified four signs correctly (approx. 4%), two subjects identified three signs correctly (approx. 9%), and five subjects identified two signs correctly (approx. 27%).

Below is a chart that summarizes the data for week two learner goal two.

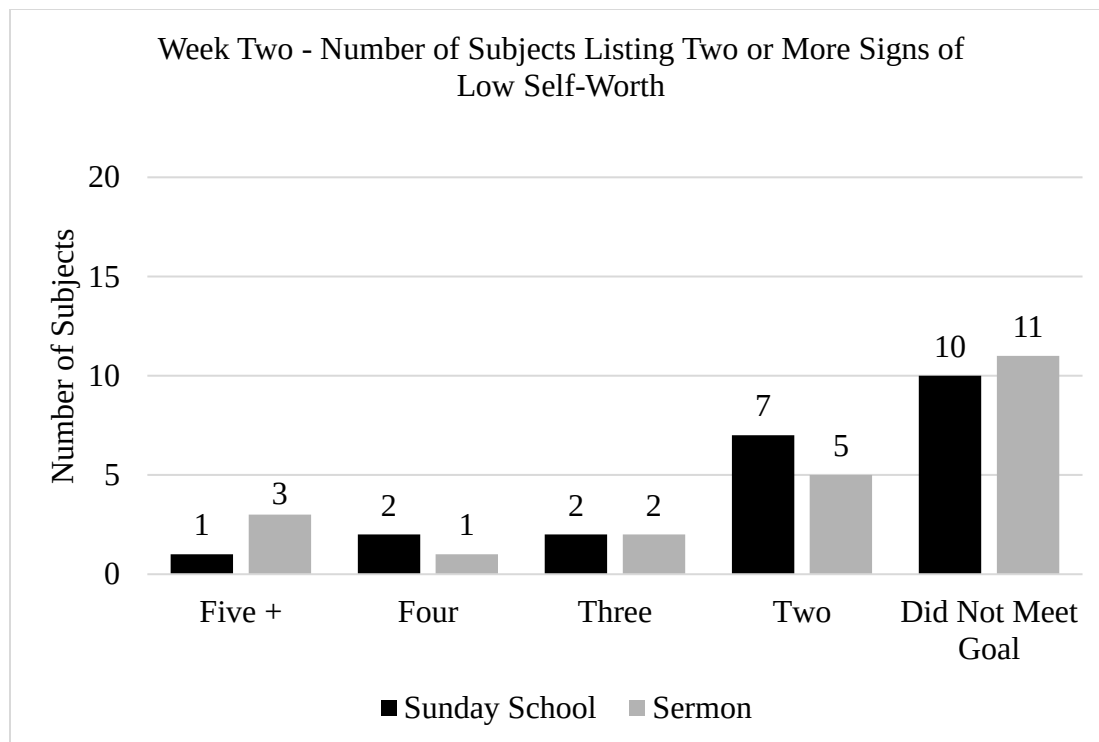


Figure 9. Week two: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

In observing the data for the correct identification of the signs of low self-worth for this week, the above stated suggestion that the sermon confuses subjects from achieving the learner goal may be called into question. For the second week, one subject identified more signs at the time of the check for understanding after the sermon than after the Sunday school class. However, the number of subjects meeting learner goal number two was the exact same at these two different times. Twelve subjects were able to

meet the learner goal of identifying two or more signs of low self-worth correctly (approx. 54%).

In week three, at the time for the Sunday school check for understanding, three subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 13%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), five subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 22%), and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 22%). At the time of the sermon check for understanding, two subjects correctly identified five or more signs (approx. 9%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), four subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 18%), and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 22%).

Below is a chart summarizing the data from week three learner goal two.

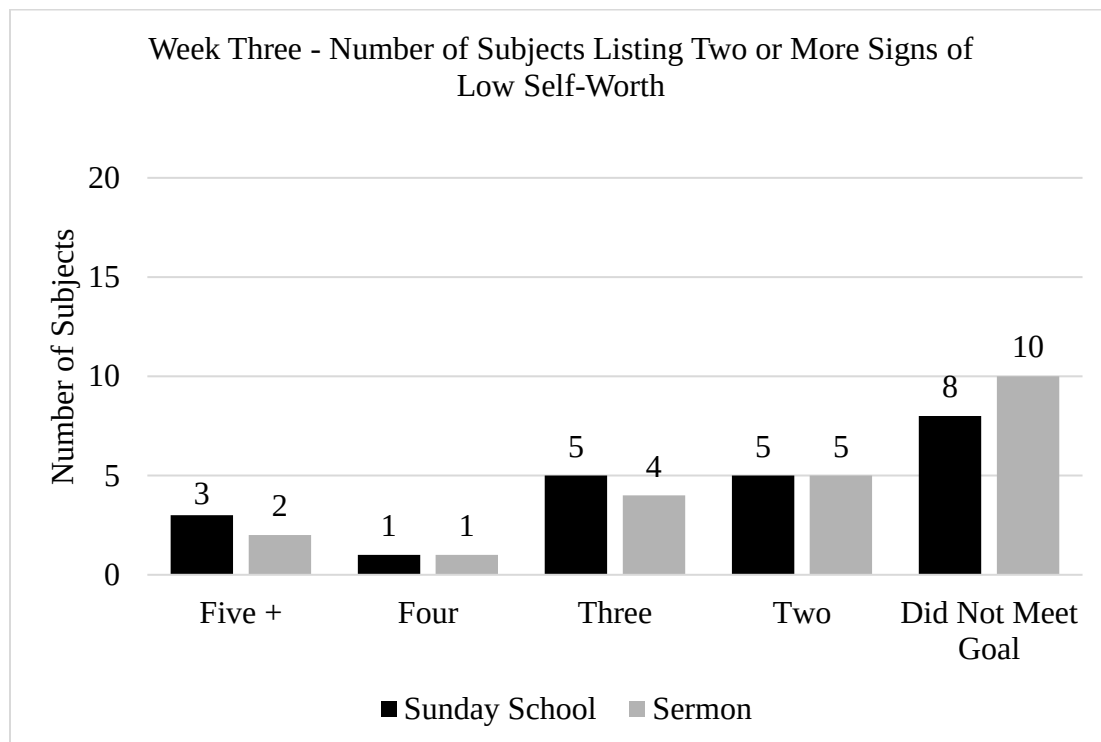


Figure 10. Week three: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

Observing the data, it can be seen that a trend for this week was that subjects identified less signs at the time of the sermon check for understanding than the Sunday school check for understanding. Overall, fourteen subjects (approx. 63%) met learner goal number two at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding while only twelve subjects met the same goal at the time of the sermon check for understanding (approx. 54%).

In week four, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, five subjects correctly identified five or more signs (approx. 23%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), one subject correctly identified three signs (approx. 4%), and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 23%). At the time of the sermon check for understanding, two subjects correctly identified five or more signs (approx. 9%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), two subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 9%), and six subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 28%).

Below is a chart summarizing the data from week four learner goal two.

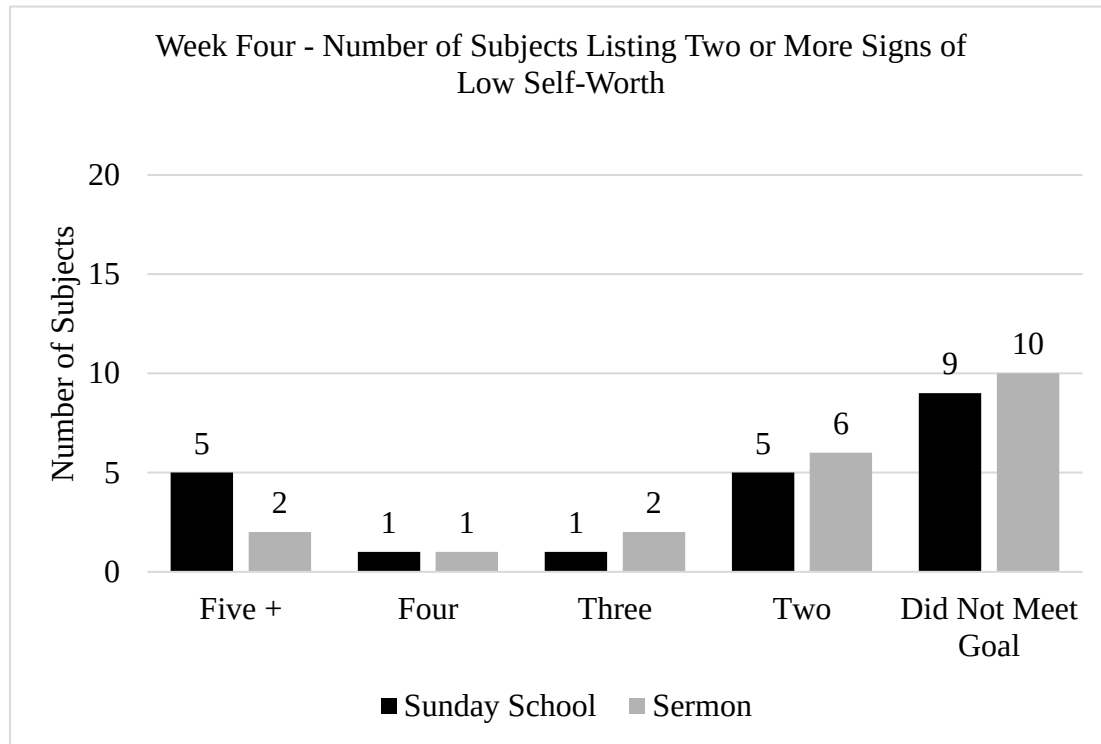


Figure 11. Week four: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

It seems, after observing weeks three and four, that there is a general trend that the sermon is less helpful in enhancing subjects' ability to correctly identify more signs of low self-worth (and meet the learner goal) than after the Sunday school class. Finally, at week four only twelve subjects met learner goal number two at the time of the check for understanding after the Sunday school class (approx. 57%), while eleven subjects met the learner goal number two at the time of the sermon check for understanding (approx. 52%).

In week five, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, five subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 23%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), five subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 23%), and three subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 14%). At the time of the

sermon check for understanding, three subjects correctly identified five signs or more (approx. 14%), two subjects correctly identified four signs (approx. 9%), three subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 14%), and four subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 19%).

Below is a summary chart of the data from week five learner goal two.

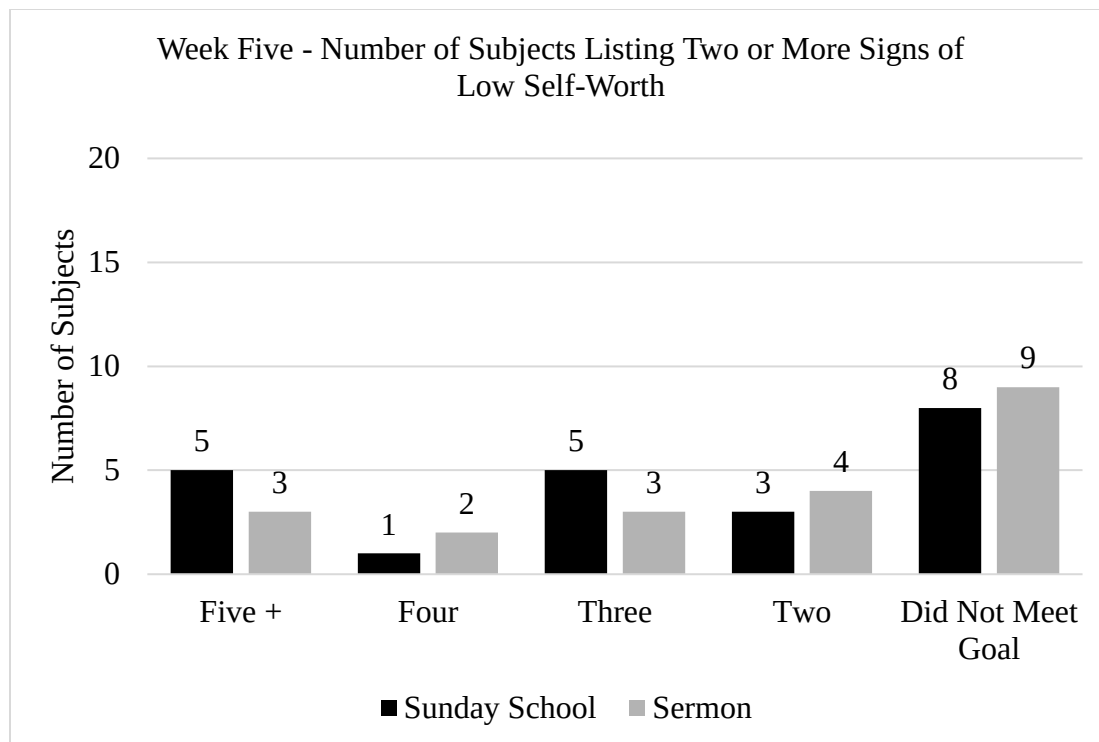


Figure 12. Week five: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

Again, it is observed that the above suggestion that the subjects are less able to meet the learner goal at the time of the sermon check for understanding than the Sunday school check for understanding. Overall, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, fourteen subjects met learner goal number two (approx. 66%), while at the time of the sermon check for understanding only twelve subjects met the learner goal (approx. 57%).

In week six, at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding, five subjects correctly identified five or more signs of low self-worth (approx. 28%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), two subjects identified three signs (approx. 9%), and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 23%). At the time of the sermon check for understanding, three subjects correctly identified five or more signs (approx. 14%), zero subjects correctly identified four signs, three subjects correctly identified three signs (approx. 14%), and six subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 28%).

Below is a summary chart of the data from week six learner goal two.

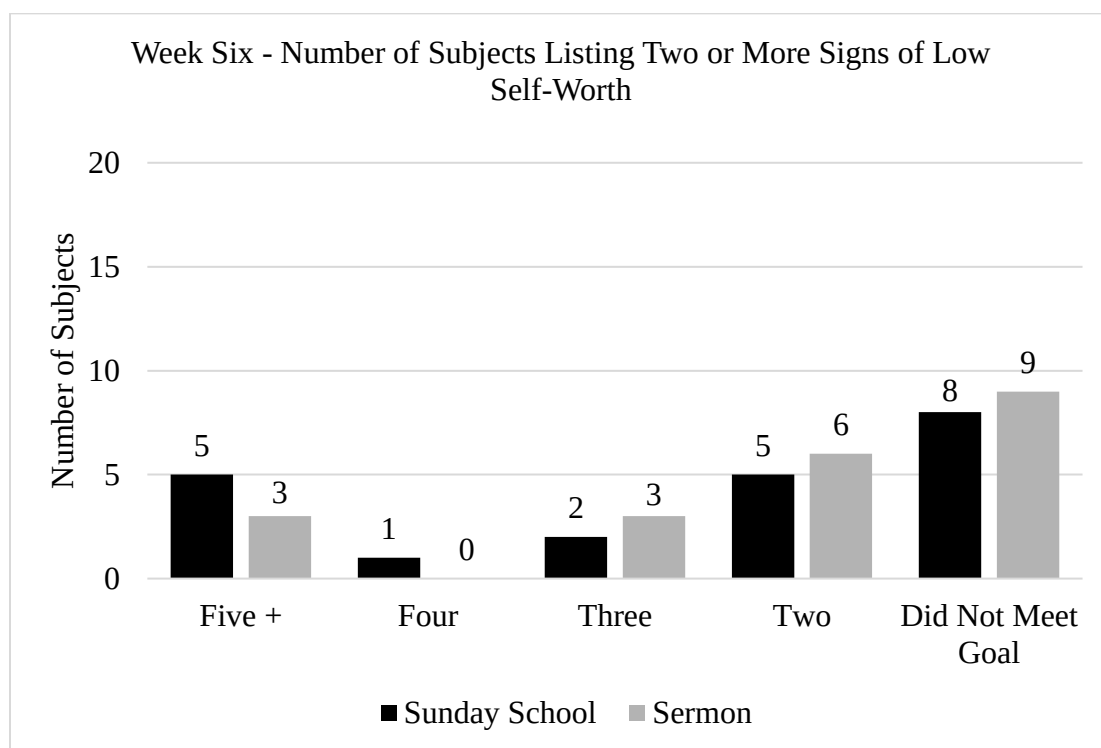


Figure 13. Week six: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

In observing the data from this week and over the last six weeks, a trend can be identified that subjects were generally less able to successfully meet learner goal number two, and were less able to correctly identify signs of low self-worth, at the time of the

sermon check for understand than at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding. Overall in week six, thirteen subjects met learner goal number two at the time of the check for understanding (approx. 61%), while only twelve subjects met the goal at the time of the sermon check for understanding (approx. 57%).

The following chart presents a quick visual tracking the progress of subjects towards learner goal two, being able to identify signs of low self-worth.

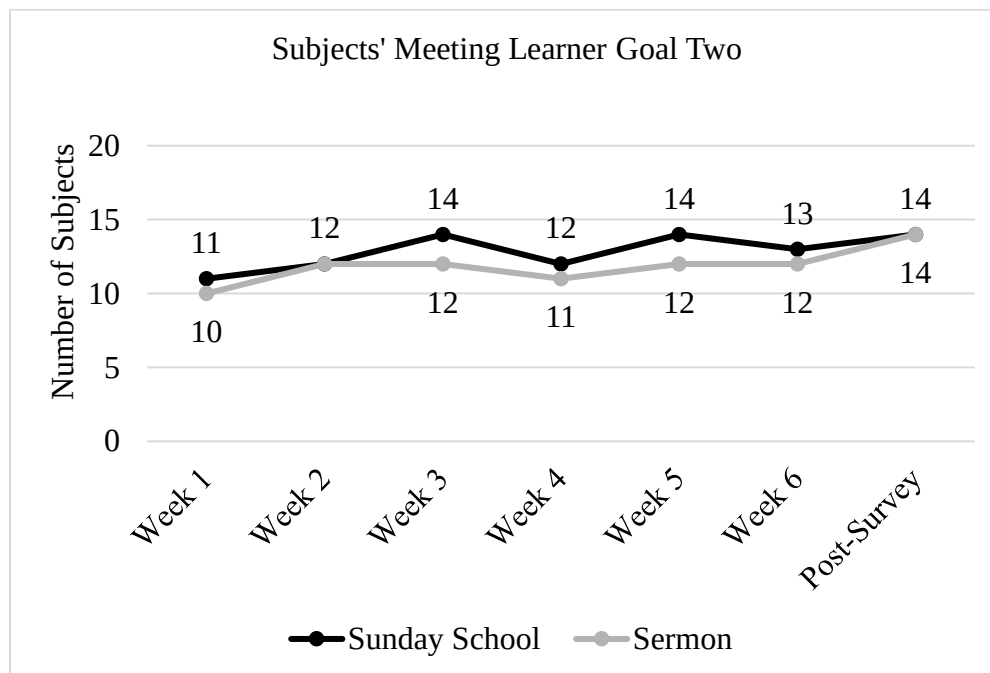


Figure 14. Subjects' meeting learner goal two

At the time of the pastoral discussion post-interview, two subjects correctly identified five signs of low self-worth (approx. 9%), one subject correctly identified four signs (approx. 4%), zero subjects correctly identified three signs, and five subjects correctly identified two signs (approx. 38%).

Below is a summary chart of the data for the pastoral discussions, learner goal two.

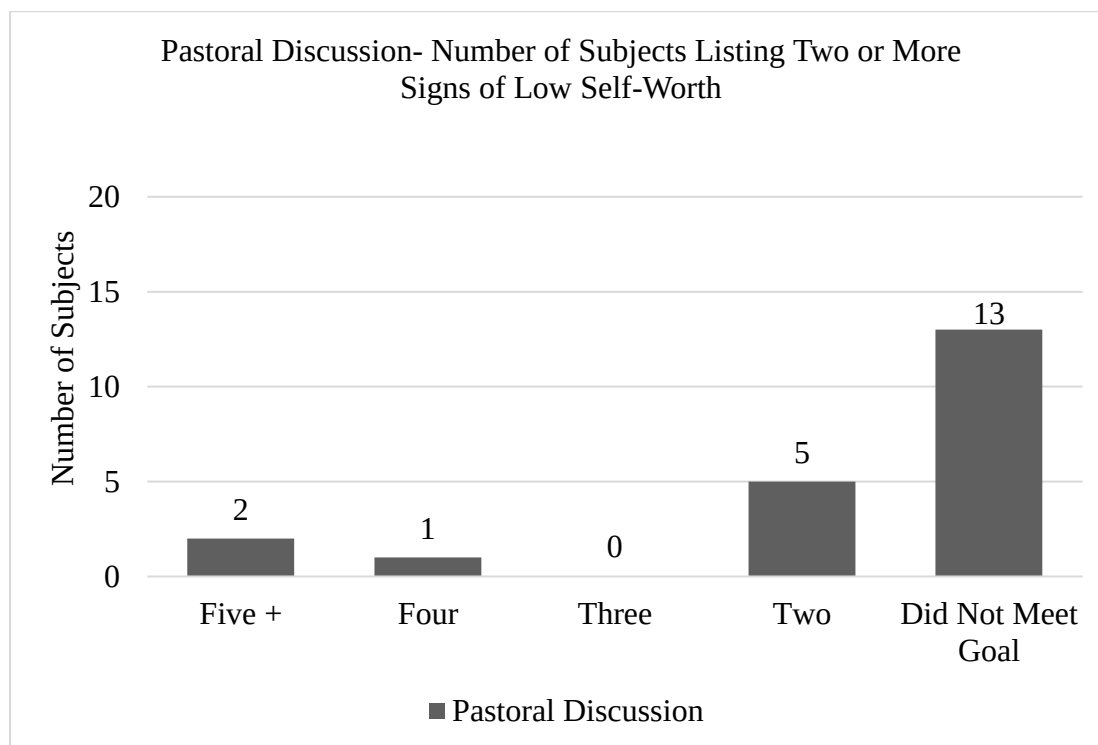


Figure 15. Pastoral discussion: Number of subjects listing two or more signs of low self-worth

It is observed that only eight subjects met the learner goal at the time of the pastoral discussion. This does not seem to correlate with the data found during the corresponding check for understandings during weeks four through six. It may be that the pastoral discussion was ineffective, or perhaps the oral nature of the data collection was more difficult for the subjects than the written nature of the other checks for understanding. It may also be possible that some subjects were using learning aids during the Sunday school and sermon checks for understanding and were unable to recall with exactness the signs of low self-worth from memory during the pastoral discussion post-interview.

The third learner goal was for subjects to know some ways to be positioned or to help position another for healing that will come through the love of God. On the pre and post survey, this goal was measured in two separate questions. The first question asked for ways for a person to be positioned for healing from low self-worth. In the pre-survey, subjects recorded a variety of means for being positioned for healing and or to help position another for healing. Responses included: knowing God, growing in God, reading and focusing on the Bible, prayer, professional counseling, trusting God, getting help from another person, and thinking positively. In general, subjects seemed to have a grasp of how to be healed and or help position another for healing.

Based on the curriculum, certain key words and or topics were expected to appear on the post-survey in response to this question of being positioned or helping another be positioned for healing. The concepts of guilt, shame, and how to deal with them (week two Sunday school and sermon), the *imago dei* and the importance of community (week three Sunday school and sermon), the VIM model for change applied to being positioned for healing (week four Sunday school and sermon), the inner critic (week five Sunday school), growing in Christ and knowing the blessing it is to be in his Kingdom (week five sermon), and forgiveness (week five sermon and week six Sunday school), and seeing self from God's perspective and trusting God because of his love for us (week six sermon) are all things that are expected to appear, in addition to the spiritual disciplines.

Zero subjects mentioned guilt, shame, and how to deal with them, though a sporadic few mentioned the practice of confession, but not in the context of dealing with sin guilt or shame. The concept of *imago dei* was not mentioned by any subject on the post-survey; but community was frequently mentioned in one way or another. The VIM

model was mentioned only by one subject, specifically “vision” and “take daily steps towards healing,” which is probably a reference to “means.” The “means” section of the model was not explicitly mentioned by any subject, but every subject put down a “means” for being healed. This does not necessitate or show a working knowledge of the VIM model. Dealing with the inner critic was mentioned by zero subjects on the post-survey, though one subject mentioned having the mind of Christ to combat negative thought patterns. Zero subjects mentioned moving into an understanding of blessing based on residing in God’s Kingdom. Zero subjects responded with seeing self from God’s perspective, though some mentioned God’s love for people.

Seven subjects mentioned forgiveness in the post-survey, in contrast to zero subjects mentioning it on the pre-survey. Two of these seven subjects named the entire process of forgiveness taught during week five Sunday school. Many subjects made references to community, to developing a deeper relationship with God, to reading and to meditating or memorizing the Bible, and to seeking help and or guidance.

Subjects may have met the third learner goal in a vague sense of knowing some ways to be positioned for healing by God’s love. However, the observation is quickly made that several critical topics taught during the curriculum were not articulated on the majority of post-surveys. The question must be asked if this was a failure of the individual sessions or if this was a failure of instructing in such a manner that knowledge was retained. Therefore, observations on the checks for understanding for the individual sessions must be made in order to see if a probable location of failure can be determined.

The check for understanding after Sunday school session two (on guilt and shame) is reviewed first. At the time of that check for understanding, fifteen of twenty-

two subjects (approx. 68%) wrote correct answers to the question “How do guilt and shame relate to low self-worth?” Ten subjects (approx. 45%) were able to correctly identify the cause of guilt and shame, and correspondingly low self-worth, in the explained example of John Woolman.

During the sermon check for understanding for session two (also on guilt and shame), twenty subjects of twenty-two (approx. 90%) were able to identify something substantive that was helpfully repeated during both Sunday school and the sermon, such as a means for dealing with shame through understanding the concept of people being a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

The observation that can be made regarding session two (guilt and shame) is that at the time of the session, there is a general understanding of the material. This understanding was not reflected in the post-survey. One observation for later is that the knowledge of the impact of guilt and shame was also not reflected on the pre-survey.

The concept of the *imago dei* was also not reflected on the post-survey, although its companion topic (community) was frequently mentioned in one way or another. On the check for understanding after the Sunday school session three, fifteen of twenty-two subjects (approx. 68%) were able to correctly identify that the *imago dei* (being made in the image of God) was a reason God loves humans, which is a tremendous part of self-worth. Regarding community, nineteen out of twenty-two subjects (approx. 86%) were able to correctly identify some elements of healthy community. Fifteen subjects were able to articulate a basic definition of *ubuntu* theology correctly (approx. 68%).

The sermon for session three was a bit different than Sunday school. The sermon articulated what healthy self-worth looked like, including the concept of *imago dei* as a

part of healthy self-worth. Primarily, this happened by helping learners to see how God evaluates humankind. Seventeen of twenty-two subjects (approx. 77%) were able to write something they learned from the sermon that was not in the Sunday school class about healthy self-worth. Only five subjects identified something along the lines of *imago dei*, if that includes responses of reflecting and or mirroring God's glory into the world (approx. 22%).

The observation can be made that at the time of filling out the check for understanding for the Sunday school session three, there was general knowledge regarding community, *ubuntu*, and *imago dei*. At the end of the sermon, *imago dei* did not seem to be on the forefront of subjects' minds. The question must be asked, what makes the difference between the *imago dei* and community that subjects on the post-survey recorded "community" frequently but did not record the *imago dei* at all?

It can be observed that in some ways, community was mentioned on the pre-survey by people referencing getting help from others, whether professional or another person. Therefore, a tenable suggestion is that "new" concepts were either not mentioned or less frequently mentioned on the post-survey than "previously known" concepts which subjects were already familiar with, or had some knowledge of, as recorded on the pre-survey. Looking backwards, this holds true for the concept of guilt and shame, as these two concepts were not mentioned on the pre-survey and were not mentioned on the post-survey. This suggestion will be referred to going forward.

Session four, during both Sunday school and the sermon, taught the VIM model. At the time of filling out the check for understanding after Sunday school, nineteen of twenty-two subjects were able to correctly identify what VIM stood for (approx. 90%).

Seventeen subjects were able to articulate how the VIM principle could be used in a general, conceptual sense (approx. 80%). However, when asked “How can the VIM principle be applied to position someone for healing by the love of God?” only three subjects were able to articulate a correct response (approx. 14%). Based on this data, there seems to have been a failure in the curriculum to spend adequate time specifically applying the VIM principle to being positioned for healing from low self-worth.

When filling out the check for understanding for the sermon, subjects displayed similar understanding after the sermon as after the Sunday school. Only four subjects (approx. 18%) learned something about VIM during the sermon that they had not learned during the Sunday school time. Sixteen subjects articulated something they learned that was repeated in both Sunday school and during the sermon (approx. 72%).

The observation that can be made from this data is that subjects were able to articulate a conceptual knowledge of VIM, at the time of the checks for understanding. Nine subjects (approx. 40%) wrote that it was helpful to have it repeated in both Sunday school and the sermon. However, based on the data, there was not a real working knowledge of VIM by the end of this session. This concept may also be considered “new” because it was not articulated by any subject on the pre-survey. The suggestion that concepts known before the curriculum, as articulated on the pre-survey, appear more often on the post-survey may still be supported. However, an additional suggestion comes to mind. If a concept is simply conceptual and does not enter the realm of practical (i.e. working) knowledge, it may not be something of first importance when filling out surveys such as the post-survey. This may hold true for both the sessions two (guilt and

shame) and sessions three (*imago dei* and community). It is something to keep in mind as the analysis continues.

Session five included two different topics. During the Sunday school session, the inner critic was the topic. During the sermon, three chains of enslavement to low self-worth were taught: not going to God for life, the lack of understanding that blessing originates in one's location in the Kingdom of God, and unforgiveness. At the time of filling out the Sunday school check for understanding, fourteen of twenty-one subjects (approx. 66%) were able to define the inner critic successfully. At the time of the check for understanding after the sermon, when asked about something that was most helpful in Sunday school that was not in the sermon, nine subjects mentioned the inner critic (approx. 42%). Twelve subjects (approx. 57%) listed either one chain or several chains of enslavement, or mentioned the idea of chains of enslavement, as being something helpful that was learned in the sermon that was not in the Sunday school class.

The observation that can be made here is that a majority of subjects were able to correctly define the inner critic at the time of the Sunday school check for understanding. A handful of subjects were able to recall the inner critic and the concept of the chains of enslavement to low self-worth by the time of the sermon check for understanding. Examining the pre-survey data, the inner critic and the concept of being blessed by the Kingdom of God were not present. Since these two pieces were new concepts, and since they did not appear on the post-survey, it seems to support the suggestion that concepts known before the curriculum have a tendency to appear more often than concepts not on the pre-survey seems to have gained some measure of support. Two ways of breaking chains of enslavement that were mentioned on the post-survey were going to God as the

source of life and forgiveness. While the former is mentioned in various ways on the pre-survey, the latter was not. However, given the context and the subjects, it could be generalized that subjects were familiar with both of these concepts before the curriculum; even if, they were not mentioned directly on the pre-survey.

The final item that was expected to appear on the post-survey but did not was seeing self from God's point of view – namely that God values us. This concept was very much part of the sermon during week six. The Sunday school topic was on forgiveness for that final session. When asked to name something learned during the sermon time that was not in the Sunday school time, eight of twenty-one subjects listed “God values us” or something similar but specifically using the word value (38%).

The observation that can be made is the failure of this final sermon to appropriately equip people with the main point of the sermon because only a small number of subjects articulated the main point correctly at the time of the check for understanding. It is certainly true that it did not appear on the post-survey in response to the question asking people how they can be positioned for healing. However, on the post-survey, when asked to define self-worth, seventeen of twenty-one subjects (approx. 80%) correctly identified healthy self-worth as seeing self from God's perspective, having value based on God's perspective and in God's eyes, and being a child of God.

Therefore, a more correct observation encompassing the data on this last point seems to be that there was a disconnect between how knowing one's value in God can help position someone for healing and or self for healing from low self-worth.

Furthermore, for this particular topic, a more thorough, careful teaching connecting the

dots together would have been helpful. It was not a complete failure of sermon six in the curriculum.

Overall, after the examination of the data for the first part of learner goal three, utilizing data specifically answering the question, “How can someone be positioned for healing from low self-worth” on the post-survey. It seems to suggest that concepts familiar to subjects before the curriculum (as articulated on the pre-survey) appeared more often than possibly new concepts presented in the curriculum. This makes sense of the data and why certain concepts were so absent while answering this question on the post-survey. However, this does not alone determine the value of the entire curriculum as many deductions could be made from this suggestion. For example, it may mean that people, when given open-ended questions, write down more familiar concepts because they more frequently come to mind, not because someone has not learned something new.

The second part of the learner goal three is to help position another for healing from low self-worth. On the pre-survey, common themes included prayer, encouragement, mentoring, friendship, listening well, loving the other person, and some mentioned offering help in accessing treatment.

In the post-survey, based on the curriculum, it was expected that subjects would list some of the topics mentioned above concerning how one might position self for healing. Themes of friendship, listening well, sharing God’s love, prayer, encouragement, were primary themes observed on the post-survey. This implies community as being important, but community can also be seen as primary theme on the pre-survey. While subjects might have phrased this differently between the pre-survey and the post-survey,

it is clear from the objective data that no real change occurred in the observed responses to the subjects from the pre-survey to the post-survey for this specific question. The data collected from the checks for understanding for the sermons and Sunday school classes does not add any additional information than what was found during the review of learner goal three part one, above.

For the pastoral discussion, the question for learner goal three was merged into a single question, “How do we position ourselves and or help others be positioned for healing from low self-worth by the love of God?” In their responses at the time of the pastoral discussion post-survey, seven subjects focused on positioning themselves, ten subjects focused on positioning others, three subjects included methods for both, and one subject did not know how to respond. This is an interesting data point, as the responses indicate whether someone believed they needed to be positioned for healing or not.

Common themes in responses to this question included knowing God’s love or showing God’s love, encouraging people, the spiritual disciplines (scripture, prayer, etc.), having a close relationship with God, and being a good listener. Many of these are very general responses to the question, which are not wrong by any means, but does not reflect the full extent of the curriculum taught. As in the observation with the post-survey, expected responses were missing. Topics such as dealing with guilt and shame, the *imago dei*, the VIM method (only one subject used this methodology), and the inner critic were absent. General comments about healthy community were present, reflected in being a good listener and encouraging people, which was a part of week three’s curriculum. Forgiveness was taught after a majority of the pastoral discussions were completed, so it was not necessarily expected during the interview.

In my observation and by my reckoning, the pastoral discussions were not necessarily helpful in further equipping subjects to meet learner goal three with a working knowledge of the variety of topics in the curriculum. However, it does seem that a few positive topics stood out in subjects' minds.

Ultimately, it seems learner goal three met with very mixed results across the scope of the curriculum. In very general terms, learners met the learner goal. In specific terms of knowing the contents of the curriculum and their application, learner goal three was not met by a majority of participants, as indicated by the above analysis.

The fourth learner goal was that the learner would articulate a belief concerning the severity of low self-worth. On the pre-survey, subjects articulated a variety of beliefs concerning the severity of low self-worth. Some prevalent themes included: depression, causes problems in our society, spectrum of severity from minor to major, can lead to bad results in life, affects people around us, can hurt a person's ability to do something, and suicide.

On the post-survey, six subjects expressly articulated the low self-worth could be a severe issue. Twelve additional subjects articulated resulting hardships in life because of low self-worth. In contrast to the pre-survey, the post-survey results can be observed to have specific focus to the responses, in contrast to the various range of responses in beliefs on the pre-survey.

The primary data point collection for this learner goal throughout the curriculum occurred on the check for understanding after the sermon. The purpose was to find the overall effect of each session on someone's belief and ability to articulate the belief that low self-worth can be severe. During the first week, twelve subjects (approx. 52%)

articulated a belief about the severity of low self-worth and or its effects. The second and third weeks, thirteen subjects (approx. 59%) were able to do so. The fourth week only ten subjects (approx. 47%) articulated a belief. The fifth week eleven subjects (approx. 52%) were able to articulate a belief, and in the final week only five subjects articulated a belief about the severity of low self-worth (approx. 23%).

Below is a chart summarizing the data from weeks one through six for learner goal four.

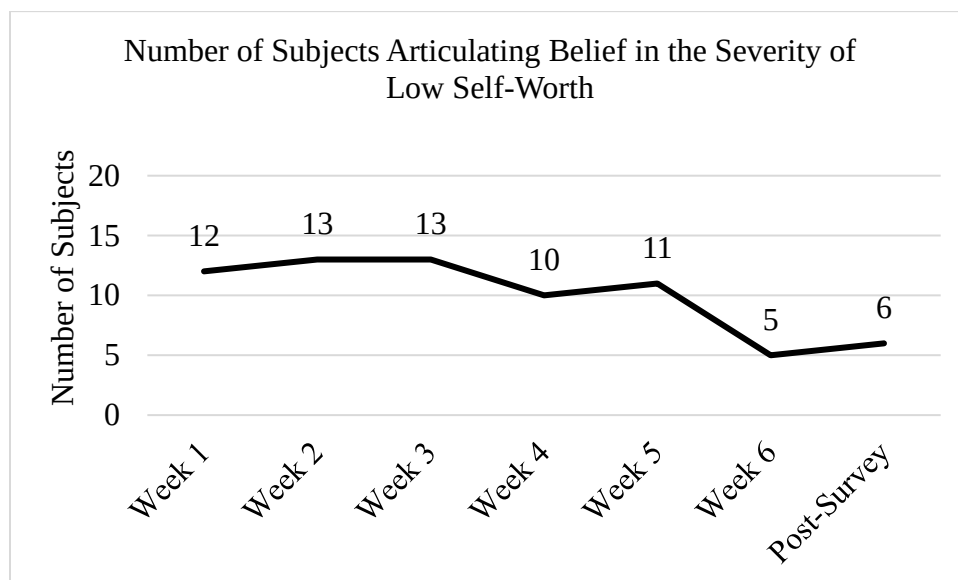


Figure 16. Number of subjects articulating belief in the severity of low self-worth

This data track records a failure in the curriculum to consistently discuss the severity of low self-worth and its effects. A tentative increase in those able to articulate the severity of low self-worth occurred in the first three weeks of the curriculum, but then declined in the final three weeks. The resulting twelve subjects of the post-survey articulating a belief about the severity of low self-worth is comparative to initial impressions and beliefs after the first session of the curriculum.

Subjects were not asked to articulate a belief concerning the severity of low self-worth during the pastoral discussions. This absence was to make room for questions analyzing the effectiveness of the pastoral discussions.

Overall, based on the accumulated data, it can be observed that the developed and implemented curriculum had very mixed results in both the form of the curriculum and its ability to equip subjects to meet the learner goals. At the time of the post-survey, nine subjects met learner goal one (approx. 42%), and fourteen subjects met learner goal two (approx. 66%). Learner goal three was not met because of the lack of specific curriculum material giving substance to subjects' answers. Learner goal four was articulated by six subjects (approx. 28%), with twelve subjects more pointing towards the severity of low self-worth (approx. 57%). Therefore, learner goal four was met with mixed results.

Below is a chart summarizing the data of the number of subjects meeting each learner goal.

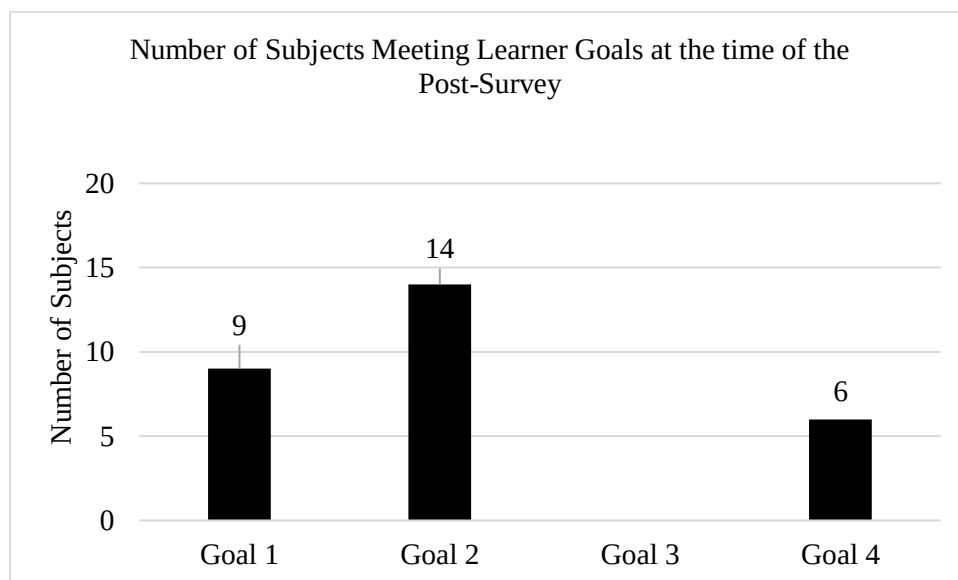


Figure 17. Number of subjects meeting learner goals at the time of the post-survey

Subjective Evaluations

It would be remiss to exclude some of the subjective evaluations of the different components of the curriculum that was gathered because subjects' subjective experiences of the curriculum are an important learning. On the post-survey, when asked to rank the elements of the curriculum (Sunday school, sermon, pastoral discussion) from most important to least important in their experience of them, eleven subjects ranked Sunday school of first importance (approx. 52%), two subjects ranked sermons of first importance (approx. 9%), and one subject ranked the pastoral discussion of first importance (approx. 4%). Seven surveys were discarded due to illegibility or multiple rankings of different elements with the same number (approx. 33%). Below is a summary chart of this data.

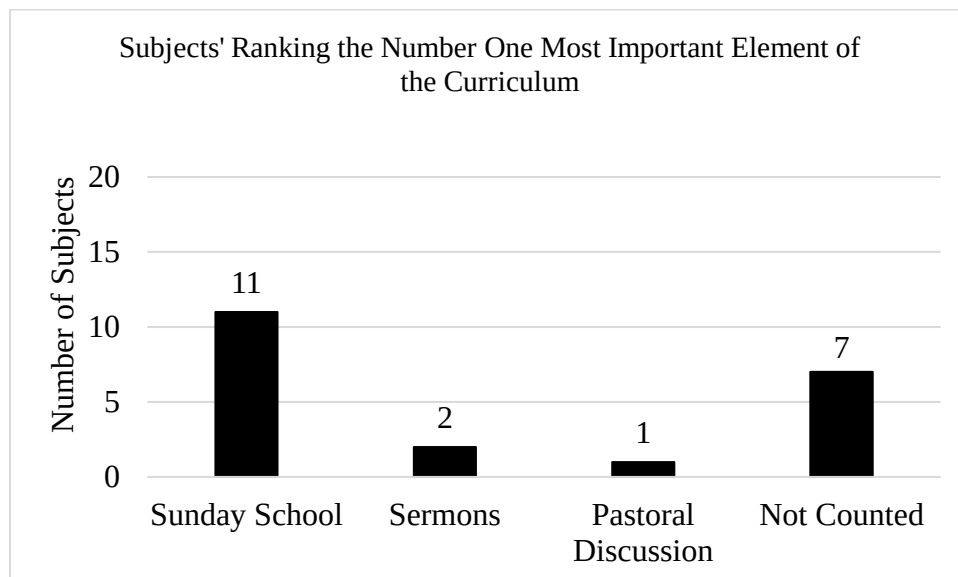


Figure 18. Subjects' ranking the number one most important element of the curriculum

This seems to show that by the end of the curriculum, Sunday school stood out as the most important element of the curriculum in the subjects' experience of them.

Overall, of second importance was the sermon, and third importance was the pastoral discussion.

On the post-survey, when asked to describe their experience of the curriculum, subjects generally expressed positive thoughts, such as raised awareness, increased understanding, greater knowledge of Jesus' love and self-worth, helpful, informative, and well done. Some direct quotes from subjects include, "learned a lot – enjoyed curriculum," "has been a good experience," "very informative." "It's been good and worthwhile," "eye opening – thought provoking – desire to learn scripture."

Neutral feedback included comparisons to a psychology course, a desire for the curriculum to be shortened, and the heaviness of the first two weeks of the curriculum, or suggestions for slight modifications to the curriculum. Direct quotes from subjects include, "The first two weeks were heavy with a lot of content; the final four weeks were informative and offered examples of scripture and contemporary thought to build upon a foundation of understanding." "A lot of it was basic psychology, some parts more challenging than others." No subject expressed a negative experience of the curriculum.

During the six weeks of Sunday school, at the time of each check for understanding, subjects recorded generally (meaning much more often than not) positive statements about their experiences of Sunday school. These statements included general statements about what was learned during that class, some included the word "positive," or a statement about how the class positively affected them. Neutral statements included suggestions for improvement, some disagreement with the material presented, or a desire for more time to take in the material. Negative statements included a dislike of being asked to raise their hands if they could identify with a certain experience. Several blank responses also peppered this question of the survey.

During the six weeks of sermons, at the time of each check for understanding, subjects recorded mixed experiences ranging from positive to negative. Positive statements included something learned during the sermon, positive affirmations, and appreciation of the presentation. Negative statements included confusion (especially during weeks one, two, and six) and or negative feelings. Many blanks appeared for this question throughout the weeks, but most heavily appeared during the first two weeks (six blanks each of the first two weeks). These blanks may indicate low satisfaction or an unawareness of the question due to it being on the back of the survey.

When asked about their experience of the pastoral discussion during their pastoral discussion post-interview, subjects were very positive. Expressions included appreciation, relief, general learnings, good, warm, enjoyable, interesting, and better than expected.

Overall, the experience that had the most mixed experiences recorded was the sermon, while the most positive experience for many was the pastoral discussion. This means the subjective experience of each curriculum element does not necessarily mean the most important part of the curriculum, even by the subjects' own standards (see the ranking of the elements of the curriculum by importance above).

Personal

Reflecting on my own personal journal I kept during the project period, I learned that I tend to reflect negatively on most areas of performance. This is not an unexpected finding due to the nature of the problem under investigation during this project, which is low self-worth. Second, I learned that I am able to quickly overhaul a curriculum based

on reactions and a reflection with a professional associate after the first sermon and Sunday school time. In the first week, it was suspected that there was too much information being presented in Sunday school, based on verbal feedback and my own perceptions. Swift revisions were made in order to cut down material to the most essential and critical points in the remaining weeks. This ability was something I did not know I could do before it happened. Finally, an essential re-confirmation and learning was just how much God provides for me when I pray.

Next, it was interesting to note from the data that the most important element for many subjects was the Sunday school class. This is a personal lesson for me that I am identified as a pastor-teacher, with abilities that perhaps lean more towards lecturing than preaching. The data also warned me to take more care and clarity as I prepare sermons, as consistently the suggestion that the sermons seemed to confuse subjects and hinder them from achieving learning goals was upheld throughout this analysis.

Conclusion

The original hypothesis was that if the developed curriculum about raising awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God was implemented at South Union, then awareness about those two topics would be raised. Specifically, in evaluating the curriculum, four learner goals were proposed. First, the learner would be able to articulate a definition of low self-worth. Second, the learner would be able to list some signs of low self-worth. Third, the learner would know how to position themselves or another for healing by the love of God. Fourth, the learner would be able to articulate a belief regarding the severity of low self-worth.

This hypothesis was proven with mixed results. The data shows that a handful of subjects met each learner goal, some goals better than others. Nine subjects of twenty-one correctly defined low self-worth, only three of which were able to closely define it on the pre-survey. Therefore, six subjects better articulated a definition of self-worth between the pre and post surveys. Fourteen subjects of twenty-one correctly identified some signs of low self-worth. The curriculum proved inadequate in helping subjects meet the third learner goal with specificity and depth based on the implemented curriculum. Finally, six subjects out of twenty-one expressed a belief about the severity of low self-worth; twelve additional subjects believed hardships resulted from low self-worth. It is suspected that the curriculum had an impact on the above results. Since each of the learner goals were not fully met, or even met by a majority of participants, I believe the hypothesis that awareness about low self-worth and about the healing love of God among frequent church attendees through the implementation of the developed curriculum only partially succeeded.

Several things can be learned about the curriculum from these statistics. First, the curriculum was not as strong as it could have been. Primarily, more repetition of topics directly speaking to the learner goals could have enhanced the ability of the curriculum to enable subjects to meet those goals. Second, the above statistics help make it known that although something is taught and heard, it may not be learned. This seems to be a major reflection and one that needs to be carefully thought through.

Several parts of this project are valuable for future work. The analysis of Gideon having low self-worth is worthy of consideration for those exegeting Judges, for those seeking to find biblical examples of low self-worth, and for future instructors seeking to

raise awareness about low self-worth. In particular, the use of the signs of low self-worth to draw out a description of Gideon as having low self-worth will be helpful for many people's work, as it gives a good foundation for actually saying that Gideon has low self-worth. In the case that people may disagree, the work found in chapter two will be a helpful dialogue partner.

In chapter three, the topic of guilt and shame in relation to low self-worth is a topic valuable for further exploration. Specifically, articulating how guilt and shame can contribute to low self-worth is a particularly useful section. It may be helpful as a launch point for deeper work around the various kinds of guilt, various causes of guilt and shame, and different ways of being healed from guilt and shame.

Next, Dallas Willard's VIM method discussed in chapter three is a fantastic method and model for change that can be used in just about any setting for any task. It is definitely something anyone can use if they are looking to help people change. The model that John Woolman provides of this method can also be a helpful example, even if John Woolman himself did not know he was using this method.

In chapter four, the principle takeaway for future work is the interplay between *ubuntu* and low self-worth, the necessity of the *imago dei* and community, and the key role of forgiveness. These are powerful elements and principles that can be drawn out individually or together in order to help articulate a way to position people for healing from low self-worth. It may speak to deeper levels of spiritual formation and healing from other wounds as well.

The model of the curriculum, which sought to reach frequent church attendees, is something that can also be used for future work, albeit with careful consideration for the

one assembling the curriculum. There were several pros for using the developed model (Sunday school, sermon, and one pastoral discussion). One of the pros to such a method was the ability to include anyone and everyone who was able to frequently attend church. Schedules did not necessarily have to be re-arranged in order for subjects to attend the curriculum if they attended the campus normally. Another positive to this model was using normal means experienced by frequent attendees in this context – nothing exceptional or extra was used. A seminar format may have been much more intimidating for subjects in this context who may not have a regular experience with them.

If this project was to be replicated in a different context or done again, several options open up for reconsideration or explorations. First, a different approach altogether may be desired by future researchers. Instead of focusing on low self-worth and the healing love of God as the main topic, a researcher may want to explore a biblical concept of healthy self-worth, what it takes to maintain, and how one can be healed from low self-worth. This might create a more positive approach to the project altogether and create different venues for approaching the subject.

Second, a study of curriculum development from the field of education could be helpful in developing a curriculum better suited to helping subjects learn. Alternatively, such a study could assist in determining what style of curriculum is best suited for subjects to learn (i.e. whether a seminar format or the Sunday school and sermon format). Again, such a study may also reveal helpful tips for enhancing subjects learning, especially incorporating different learning styles, more reflection questions, and or other things.

Third, a different approach to being positioned for healing by God's love could be utilized in order to enhance the subjects' ability to meet learner goal number three. In particular, researching and discussing the core longings of all human beings (such as a need to belong, feel loved, etc.) may provide fruit in helping people understand healthy self-worth and how to be healed from low self-worth. Other avenues of spiritual formation may also be considered.

Fourth, different biblical studies may provide fruits. Passages speaking about being a child of God, the grace of God, or the forgiveness of God may provide substantial assistance in speaking about low self-worth, the healing love of God, and healthy self-worth. Focusing on these biblical passages might help to articulate a glowing, attracting, intriguing vision for change and a means of changing one's thinking. Such a focus might draw people out of low self-worth by teaching on God's transforming power in depth and in greater quantities.

Fifth, a variety of different theologies and theological topics may be quite fruitful. Discussing regeneration and the new birth might provide particular benefits in contexts where there may be more unbelievers, church-going but unsaved individuals, or new believers. Alternatively, a study of the new creation in 1 Corinthians 5:17 might prove very valuable to a curriculum seeking to help position people for healing from low self-worth. Studies of sanctification or spiritual formation may also bear fruit as different theological topics. These topics would provide a great deal of value for helping to articulate the means of being positioned before God for healing. It would also give a depth of understanding to the great soul work that needs to be done by God in a person's

life to overcome low self-worth. This soul work would include a whole life transformation in the mind, heart, body, social context, and soul.

If I had to redo this project, I would most likely look to run the curriculum in a seminar format over six weeks. I would look to limit subjects to a number that would make suitable small groups for discussion (i.e. six, twelve, or eighteen subjects that would be able to split into one, two, or three small groups of six each). This would enable people to have times of discussion and reflection together, which is a component that was missing during the curriculum. I would change this because the Sunday school hour ran out of time so quickly that in depth discussion and reflection was very limited, and the sermon left no time for discussion by the very nature of being a sermon.

Second, while not changing the content of the curriculum, I would change how it was presented. I would limit the teaching to the very most critical components, possibly just one item per six-week curriculum. In such a way, more space for repetition could be created. I would also utilize more means of helping subjects learn just those critical components, perhaps reinforcing different learning styles and using things such as art, a reflection journal, or other such things.

While many alternative avenues for research were suggested above, I would not change any of the content of the curriculum or the research found within this document or within this implemented curriculum. As someone who knew nothing about low self-worth or self-worth before this project began, each chapter and the substance of the curriculum was essential for establishing a basic foundation of knowledge for this topic. This curriculum does help to raise awareness about low self-worth and about the healing

love of God, most of all in myself. With some tweaks, this curriculum could become very strong.

South Union Mennonite Church, the current context, and I, the researcher, have certainly benefited from the research and the project found herein. The exploration of the histories of the context and myself, the analysis of Gideon utilizing a lens of low self-worth, the case study of John Woolman, the theological inquiries into Christian *ubuntu* and *imago dei*, and the basic psychological investigations were all excellent choices and helpful overall. The current project which developed a curriculum about low self-worth and about the healing love of God in order to raise awareness among frequent church attendees met with mixed results. The hypothesis that awareness would be raised around this topic met with mixed results as well. Awareness was certainly raised, but with a very mixed amount of conceptual accuracy. With further work, this curriculum could be transformed and become more effective.

APPENDIX A
PRE-SURVEY

PRE-CURRICULUM SURVEY***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD: A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees***

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

1. What is your definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What experiences might contribute to a sense of low self-worth?
4. What is your definition of self-worth?
5. Based on your understanding, where is a Christian's self-worth found?
6. What are some signs of healthy self-worth?
7. What is the role of God's love in relation to a Christian's self-worth?
8. What steps could a person take to be positioned for healing from low self-worth?
9. What do you believe regarding the severity of low self-worth?
10. What steps could a person with healthy self-worth take to help position a person with low self-worth for healing?

APPENDIX B

WEEK ONE HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Gideon

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
 - Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others
 - Be jealous or critical of others.
 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

Signs of Low Self-worth in Gideon

- Setting the Stage: Israel in the Hands of the Enemy (Judges 6:1-10; 8:18-19)
- Center Stage is Off Stage: Gideon in the Wine Press (Judges 6:11 & 27; 25 & 4)

- Who is the Angel of the Lord? God is speaking (Judges 6:12, 14, 23; Titus 1:2)
- Faulty Thinking: Who Abandoned Who? (Judges 6:7-10, 13)
- Faulty Perception: Humility or Low Self-Worth? (Judges 6:15, 25, 27, 31-32)
- Did the people know God was with Gideon? (Judges 6:33-35; 7:2-3)

God Desires to Heal Gideon for his Purposes

- The Purpose and the Sacrifice (Judges 6:19-24)
- Little Steps (Judges 6:25-27, 36-40; 7:9-10)
- Gideon re-wounded (Judges 8:1-3)
- God disappears from an active role/speaker in Judges 8.

What's the Issue with Having Low Self-Worth?

- Gideon Gives a Warning (Judges 8:4-9)
 - No Bread? I will torture you
 - No Bread? I will destroy your house.
- The Fulfillment (Judges 8:13-17)

What Happens to Gideon in the End?

- Follow the Money: Gideon is the Pious Mouthed King (Judges 8:22-26; 9:2)
- Worse Off than Before: Gideon Leads Idolatry (Judges 8:27, 33-35)
- Sexual Dominance: Not Just Wives but a Concubine (Judges 8:29-31)
- The Concubine's Son is Gideon's Family's Downfall (Judges 8:31; 9:4-5)

Low Self-Worth and Us:

- Low self-worth can have severe effects on someone's life and relationships.
- Low self-worth can affect our relationship with God.
- God desires to heal low self-worth for *his* purposes – including his love for us and his purpose for us in his Kingdom Work.

Personal Reflection: How Severe can Low Self-Worth Be? Reflect on the Gideon story.

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Gideon (Judges 6:11-24)

Introduction:

- My Journey with this Project: From “Pfft...” to “Whoa!”
- The Severity of Low Self-Worth

What is Self-Worth?

- Self-Worth is the evaluation, or judgment, of one’s value
- It is one part of self-esteem (the other part being performance, or life-competence)
- Low Self-Worth shows itself with the following signs: Feel isolated and unlovable. Tend to withdraw from other people. Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves. Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention. Have difficulty getting along with others. Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily. Have lower curiosity or creativity. Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others. Be jealous or critical of others. Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression. Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others. Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love. Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both. –
From Collins, *Christian Counseling*
- There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

The Stage: Wars Lost and Oppression (Judges 6:1-6)

- God hands Israel over to the Midianites because Israel was doing evil.
- Midian ravaged the land, destroying food and animals.
- What does this do to the Israelite psyche? Not good things.
- Truth: We are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Our value is far greater than what happens to us, how others treat us, or what we are made of physically.

Enter Stage Right: Gideon

- Gideon and the wine press (6:11)
- Gideon and his family (6:19, 25, 27)
- Why is Gideon threshing wheat in the wine press? Low Self-Worth.

Gideon, God, and Compliments (Judges 6:12-16):

- God (who never lies) calls Gideon a mighty warrior and says the Lord is with him.
- Gideon ignores the first compliment and refutes the second.
- Gideon doesn't listen well.
- Gideon has a greatly distorted and negative perception of himself and his family.

The Severity of Low Self-Worth:

- Another Wound: The Ephraimites criticize Gideon (Judges 8:1).
- Gideon asks for bread. When refused, he promises torture (Judges 8:5-7).
- When it happens a second time, he promises to burn down a tower, the place of their defense and town's refuge (Judges 8:8).
- He murders two kings in an act of revenge (Judges 8:19-21).
- Gideon does torture, burn down, and kill those whom he promised to (Judges 8:15-17).
- Gideon has become man driven to gain power and superiority over others in a very negative way.

The Outcome:

- Gideon becomes a king who is not a king (Judges 8:22-27).
- Gideon creates an idol whom all Israel falls into worship (Judges 8:27, 33).
- Gideon has many wives, 70 sons, 1 concubine, and 1 son from the concubine (Judges 8:30-31).
- Gideon's son from the concubine starts a civil war, including killing 69 of Gideon's other sons, leaving only 1 young son alive (Judges 9:1-6).

Carryout:

- The intent of this sermon is to allow us to work with the signs of low self-worth and to talk about how severe it can be.
- Reflect: have we encountered someone who experiences low self-worth? How about ourselves?
- Sometimes, low self-worth can be a character trait, other times a situational experience.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #1: Gideon and Low Self-Worth

Date: June 2, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What experiences might have contributed to Gideon's sense of low self-worth?
4. Where was Gideon shown love by God? Describe a scene or two.
5. What caused Gideon's time as judge to take a turn in the negative direction?

Describe some of the results.

6. What are the results of Gideon's ministry?
7. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #1: Gideon and Low Self-Worth **Date:** June 2, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX C

WEEK TWO HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Guilt and Shame

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
 - Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others
 - Be jealous or critical of others.
 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

What are guilt and shame?

- Guilt results from a person's actions (wrongdoing), usually something like the transgression of boundaries. There is objective and subjective guilt.

- Shame results from falling short of one's ideals and specifically questions one's own being (wrong-being).
- Guilt fears punishment, while shame fears abandonment because if one "fails to live up to an ideal and be seen as deficient...I will show myself unlovable." – Brad Binau, "When Shame is the Question, How does the Atonement Answer?" in *Journal of Pastoral Theology*.

Low Self-Worth, Guilt, and Shame

- Campbell, a Christian Psychologist, describes self-worth as a person's Actual Self-Image contrasted to their Ideal Self-Image. – *The New Science*
- Both subjective guilt and shame revolve around transgressing self's ideal by encountering the failures/injuries of the actual.
- The important part here is to begin to separate our worth from our performance. Our actual self-image must include God's perspective and evaluation of us as children of God as the *greatest* part of our self-evaluation.

Dealing with Guilt and Shame

- Objective Guilt and Shame around Sin is Dealt with by Jesus on the Cross (Rom. 4:25; 5:18-21; 8:1; Col. 2:13-15).
- Subjective Guilt: Examining "Boundaries"
- Conviction or Condemnation? Discerning the Difference.
- Dealing with Shame: Worth in God (2 Cor. 5:17).

Personal Reflection: How does this teaching on guilt, shame, and self-worth affect me? How might I use it to benefit others?

Guilt, Shame, and Low Self-Worth (Jeremiah 3:24-25 & Rom. 8:1)

Introduction:

- Today we will discuss some of the causes of low self-worth, in particular “guilt” and “shame.”
- We will also look to find a path to healing from these causes.

What is Self-Worth?

- Self-Worth is the evaluation, or judgment, of one’s value.
- It is one part of self-esteem (the other part being performance, or life-competence).
- We will be referencing some of the following signs of low self-worth today: Feel isolated and unlovable. Tend to withdraw from other people. Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves. Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others. Be jealous or critical of others. Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression. – From Collins, Christian Counseling

Guilt and its Impact:

- Sin and Guilt are one cause of low self-worth and a primary feature of Scripture.
- Guilt can mean at least two things in our culture: we are “guilty” of a crime (regardless of what we think/feel), and we “feel guilty” about something done or not done.
- Jeremiah 51:5 is just one reference to the first type of guilt.
- Psalm 51:5 is a second reference to “guilty” of a crime/sin. This Psalm also shares how we might rejoice before the Lord by confessing, receiving pardon/forgiveness, and being restored to joy.
- Jesus is the One who pardons and removes all guilt from sin (Romans 3:21-26; Romans 8:1). One primary place of healing comes when we grab hold of this truth and let it cleanse us from all guilt.
- However, though we are pardoned, many times we still experience feelings of guilt, for things small and large, sinful and not sinful, things long forgiven by God and things that have just occurred.

- Legalistic tendencies in church or families can have a role in these “guilty” feelings.
- We have a picture of “how life should look and should go” then feel guilty when what actually happens doesn’t measure up to that ideal picture.
- One place of healing is to understand what is or is not a Biblical mandate. This redefines our ideal picture into concrete reality when properly understood.

Shame and its Impact:

- Shame is not just about what is or was done (actions) but about a wrongness of being.
- Jeremiah 3:24-25 is the prophet’s declaration that there is something wrong with the fabric of Israel, with who they are which results in what they do.
- Feeling defective or knowing oneself to have “wrong being” is a tremendous part of low self-worth (a negative assessment of one’s value).
- Shame makes us withdraw from people, push others away from knowing us too closely, hides our sin, makes us both jealous and critical of others we see as “having it all.”

Healing from Shame:

- Confession of sin or telling of our story (1 John 1:5-10; Eph. 5:12-15).
- Receiving God’s grace and implanting this truth deep within us:
 - “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5:17).
 - Something that is defective (and or felt defective) is replaced by a new creation in Christ Jesus.
 - Memorize, repeat, believe.
 - Learn to live into this truth about reality from God.

Carryout:

- How do we go forward? More coming in the next few weeks.
- Reflect: what is my ideal picture of life? Have I met that ideal? Why or why not?
- Reflect: Do I hold myself, and others, to an unrealistic standard in regard to: holiness, performance, love, assistance, etc.? Reflect: Where have I felt guilty or felt shame? Why? How can God heal me from this?

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #2: John Woolman, Guilt, and Shame

Date: June 9, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What experiences might have contributed to John Woolman's sense of low self-worth?
4. How do guilt and shame relate to low self-worth?
5. How do healthy ways of handling guilt and shame help support self-worth?
6. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #2: Guilt and Shame

Date: June 9, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX D

WEEK THREE HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: *Ubuntu* Theology

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
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 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

***Ubuntu* Christian Theology**

- *Ubuntu* is a South African word and concept translated into English very loosely as “personhood” or “humanness.”

- “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.... It says rather ‘I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.’” – Desmond Tutu
- When one person is hurt, the community is hurt and shares that pain.
- One of the core longings of people is “belonging.”
- All core longings are met in God’s embrace: Love, Belonging, Security, Fulfillment, Purpose, and Identity. – Terry Wardle
- If we are in God’s embrace, then we can also embrace others – and our humanity is bound up in each other.

Imago Dei:

- Humanity is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27).
- This includes us as individuals and us as a collective.
- “We are, all of us, never-ceasing spiritual beings with a unique eternal calling to count for good in God’s great universe.” – Dallas Willard

Healthy Community:

- Jesus is the center. He is the mediator.
- Authentic, confidential, and safe.
- We see each other from God’s point of view – with love and worth.
- Speak worth and value into each other’s lives.
- Walk with each other, attentive to both the Holy Spirit’s movement and to Scripture
- Healthy community continually does the hard work of forgiving each other.
- Gives space and grace for mistakes. Does not measure a person by their ability or performance.

Personal Reflection: Do you belong to intimate community? How would you go about building community in your church or life?

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Humility and Worth in God (Genesis 1:26-27)

Introduction:

- Today we focus on two sides of the same coin: healthy self-worth (found in God) and humility.
- Healthy self-worth is not: false humility, pride, arrogance, narcissism, or self-confidence.

Healthy Self-Worth:

- Healthy self-worth is a positive evaluation of one's *value* in light of who God is and what God says about us.
- Healthy self-worth is matching our evaluation of ourselves with God's evaluation of us (2 Cor. 5:16).
- Humility is the clear, realistic understanding of one's own position in relationship to God, to self, and to others. To have such an understanding requires seeing things from God's perspective.

God's Evaluation at Creation:

- God is, by necessity, the highest good, the being of supreme and infinite value.
- Creation was evaluated as "good."
- God created humans in his own image, after his likeness (Gen. 1:26).
- God gives humans a pre-eminent position of dominion over creation: "rule in my name and bearing my image in relationship with me."
- Once complete, God says "this is very good (Gen. 1:31).

What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

- We as human beings are made to reflect, to mirror, God.
- This function that is the original identity of humankind gives humans intrinsic worth.
- Paul speaks about this in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

- We are given a responsibility (having dominion) to fit our worth. God saw fit to give us a position in relationship with him that is one of *child* to our Father (Eph. 1:1-10).

Issues with Self-Confident Performance:

- When we take our sense of worth from our abilities and performance, then we stake our worth in something that can be defeated, lost, stolen, or destroyed.
- Ingrained in performance is an expectation of ever-increasing “bars,” or standards, to meet.
- Our performance will always be critiqued by someone, including ourselves.
- Our performance, even in doing our best, can ultimately lead to disaster and failure.
- 1 Samuel 15:17-19 is one example of this reliance on performance. Those with low self-worth to begin with can never “get” enough position, power, applause to fill the “hole” made by low self-worth.

Humility is about Encountering Reality:

- The fundamental reality to encounter is Jesus Christ, God who took on flesh (a great sign of how valuable he finds us!).
- Once we encounter God, the most real, it is wise and behooves us to humbly accept his evaluation of truth.
- In Jesus, we find all of our worth and value, though we are also to recognize our *position* as one of servant to his/her Master, child to Father, saved to Savior, created to Creator. None of this removes or negates our *worth*.
- Healthy self-worth comes from receiving the love of God, just as we are, knowing He will take us to where we need to be.

Carryout:

- How has this teaching on healthy self-worth and humility change our focus?
- What do you think is the most important thing we can do in order to know true humility and our true self-worth?

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #3: Ubuntu Theology and Low Self-Worth

Date: June 16, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What is Ubuntu Theology? List a few elements of it.
4. How does the concept of being made in the image of God speak to self-worth?
5. What are some elements of healthy community?
6. How do self-worth and forgiveness relate to each other?
7. How can those with healthy self-worth support those with low self-worth?
8. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #3: Humility and Worth in God **Date:** June 16, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX E

WEEK FOUR HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: John Woolman and VIM

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
 - Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others
 - Be jealous or critical of others.
 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

Vision, Intention, Means (VIM)

- From Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*
- A methodology for change (helpful for everyone)

- All real change in the Christian life will be a work of God's grace in us and with us.

Vision

- Vision is a concrete picture/image/dream/goal of the "ideal self."
- While it can work with just about anything, here we are thinking about *how to be like Christ and how to be healed from low self-worth*.
- John Woolman – used Scripture, Christian biographies, devotionals, and mentors he saw in his community as his "ideal" (or his Vision).

Intention

- Intention is our resolve, plan, and discipline to do what we set out to do to reach the ideal.
- It is usually a clear moment of decision with a chain of reinforcing choices based on that primary clear moment of decision.
- John Woolman had such a moment.

Means

- The "means" are the small action steps that must be planned and taken in order to fulfill the intention and move toward the vision.
- Without the "means" usually the intention becomes frustrated by failures and unplanned/unwise ways of proceeding.
- Means usually include *negating actions*. In John Woolman's situation, it was to remove himself from his group of friends.
- Means always include *positive actions*. In John Woolman's situation, he kept to his house, went to meetings (church), read Scripture and spiritual devotionals, worked hard, went on prayer walks, and kept God continually in his mind.
- This took several years for John Woolman to really grow in Christ.

Personal Reflection: Have you ever had a vision for living with God and like Christ? How strong was your intention? What were the means you used, or what means can you now use to help grow towards that vision?

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: How to Change (Prov. 5:23, 29:18; Mt. 7:13-14; Jer. 6:16)

Introduction:

- The intent for “how to change” is to think about ways to position us before God so that we might receive healing.
- NO true, meaningful change will be accomplished without Jesus (John 15:5).
- The process we will review is “VIM” – vision, intention, means.

Vision:

- This is a concrete ideal, or an imagined goal, of what we are aiming for.
- In Scripture, this is screamed out through the entire Bible in one word: Repent! Think differently because God is Real, Powerful, and True and the Kingdom of Heaven is Available for you to live in through Jesus Christ!!
- Proverbs 29:18 lets us know this vision must be something that is given to us by God (through/with Scripture).

Intention:

- The resolve to carry out whatever needs to be done in order to achieve the vision.
- Proverbs 5:23 lets us know that discipline is a need to head towards righteousness by what it says about the opposite.
- Jesus asks us to ponder the same question about our path – to live in the Kingdom of God or not (Mt. 7:13-14). There is always a cost (Lk 14:25-33).
- To enter into a position of being healed by God will require *war* – against our own hearts, minds, and fleshly nature, and against sin and the enemy in the spiritual realm.

Means:

- These are practical action steps we can take in order to position ourselves before God so that we might be healed from low self-worth (and live in the Kingdom of God more fully!).
- There is nothing new under the sun – the means of grace have remained the same for ages (Jer. 6:16).

- Primarily, this involves something called the “principle of indirection.” If we wish to receive healing, we don’t focus on being healed. Instead, we focus on seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.
- Prayer, pondering (contemplation/meditation) on God and Scripture, reading/studying Scripture, fasting, celebrating, silence and solitude, service, praise, thanksgiving, etc.

Carryout:

- How can this teaching apply to your life, regardless your state of self-worth?
- How can this teaching help you to position yourself to journey deeper into God?
- How can this teaching help you to help others position themselves before God for healing from low self-worth?

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #4: VIM Principle and John Woolman

Date: June 23, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What does the acronym “VIM” stand for?
4. In your opinion, how can the VIM principle be used?
5. How can the VIM principle be applied to position someone for healing by the love of God?
6. What is humility?
7. How does humility relate to healthy self-worth?
8. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #4: Vision, Intention, Means

Date: June 23, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX F

WEEK FIVE HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Insight from Psychology

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
 - Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others
 - Be jealous or critical of others.
 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

Two “Chains of Enslavement” to Low Self-Worth:

- The Inner Critic
- Unforgiveness (To be taught week 6)

The Inner Critic:

- From McKay and Fanning: The inner critic is the inner thought patterns of a person which continually critiques and abuses self, giving way to an identity of being bad or wrong.
- One tactic of this inner critic is to generalize situations in order to promote this feeling of wrongness.
- Example: “I’m fat.” “I’m stupid.” “I’m a sinner even though Christ has saved me and given me a new nature.” “I just can’t do it.”
- This is, in many ways, the fleshly mind or the mind of the accuser.

Defeating the Inner Critic:

- Identify the voice of the accuser. Is it...yourself? Your parent? A friend? An enemy?
- Identify the positive function of the critic. Is it a motivator to work faster or harder? Does it make self-feel good for a moment? Is it to prepare for a failure then get pleased at success?
- Develop rebuttals for the accuser:
 - “I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, and totally accepted by God through Jesus.” – McGee, *The Search for Significance*
 - Romans 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:8-10; 1 Jn 4:17
- Become specific. “I weigh x and want to lose y.” “I don’t understand my taxes, but I can learn how to do this competently with time and help.” “I committed x sin. Jesus please forgive me. Through you, I can overcome this sin because you have given me a new nature.” “I cannot do x right now for y reason, but I can work to do x at another time.”
- Breaking one habit and instilling another.
- We have the mind of the Christ (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16)

Personal Reflection: Have I experienced the “inner critic”?

**Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth:
Chains of Enslavement to Low Self-Worth**
(Jer. 2:13; Mt. 5:3-11, 6:14-15; Gal. 2:19-21)

Introduction:

- Today we are going to talk about some things that can keep us prisoners to low self-worth or unhealthy versions of self-worth.
- In particular, there are three chains we will discuss today: relying on self or humans; our false patterns of thinking; unforgiveness.

The First Chain and Breaking that Chain:

- Your healing (or growing in Christ) does not hinge on any human being. We must do something, yet it hinges on God. God is THE deliverer and THE savior.
- Two issues (one chain) present themselves in Jeremiah 2:13 – forsaking the fountain of living water (God) and digging out cracked cisterns to try to hold water...which drains out.
- Water is necessary for living. A fountain of living water is an endless supply of fresh water that we need to survive, grow, and heal. This is God himself.
- A cistern is an artificial reservoir, usually cut from bedrock, for collecting and conserving rain runoff from roofs and courtyards.
- This is an attempt to get the run-off from unpredictable rain – yet the rain so quickly disappears it cannot sustain a person.
- If we don't understand the all-sufficiency of Christ to save us from all things (sin, guilt/shame, low self-worth, etc.) and to provide for growth towards Christ-likeness (in the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, spiritual maturity, healing), then we will not be healed, or if we are, it will not last.
- Therefore, the most important priority and first most goal has never changed: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness...” and “Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” (Mt 6:33, 22:37-38).

The Second Chain and Breaking that Chain:

- The second chain is false, fleshly thinking.
- Romans 12:1-2 states “...be transformed by the renewing of your minds...”
- We know that our being “blessed” (or happy), and our worth, is not rooted in our worldly circumstances or in ourselves. It is rooted outside of self in God himself.

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt. 5:3).
- In any circumstance, whatever our state, whoever we are, whatever we have done, we can be blessed when we enter the Kingdom of Heaven right here and now through reconciliation through Jesus.
- If we are reconciled with him, drinking from the fountain, then no matter what we say to ourselves or others think about us, we are blessed.
- Therefore, think in this way! I am blessed because of Jesus my King!
- Gal. 2:19-21 says that my life is no longer my own, but it is Christ who lives within me. If that is true (and it is), then we have profound value and our lives are meaningful if we are walking in the yoke with Jesus.

The Third Chain and Breaking that Chain:

- The third chain to low self-worth is a lack of forgiveness.
 - Every trauma/hurt needs to be forgiven.
 - Without forgiving, the trauma/hurt may lead to anger, shame (something wrong with me), bitterness and anger.
 - If left untended, these areas of trauma/hurt can become spiritually infected and go spiritually septic.
- We can forgive by God’s power – it can be very difficult to do so. We will look at this topic with some intensity next week during the Sunday School hour.

Carryout:

- Are we currently chained/imprisoned by one of these chains, even though we have received salvation?
- Is there something keeping us from entering ever more fully into life with Jesus? If so, what is it?
- Let us praise God that all of our hope and trust can be safely placed in him.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #5: Reflections from Psychology on Low Self-Worth

Date: June 30, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What is self-esteem according to psychology?
4. What is the “inner critic?”
5. Based on your experience so far, how has your belief about low self-worth changed?
6. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #5: Chains of Enslavement to Low Self-Worth **Date:** June 30, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX G

WEEK SIX HANDOUTS AND CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth: Forgiveness

Sunday School Outline

Definition, signs, and causes of Low Self-Worth

- Low self-worth is assigning one's self a negative value.
- Signs of low self-worth include...
 - Feel isolated and unlovable.
 - Tend to withdraw from other people.
 - Feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies, lacking in the drive or motivation to defend themselves.
 - Be angry at others or at themselves but be afraid of angering others or attracting attention.
 - Have difficulty getting along with others.
 - Be submissive, dependent, and so sensitive that their feelings are hurt easily.
 - Have lower curiosity or creativity.
 - Be less inclined to disclose themselves to others
 - Be jealous or critical of others.
 - Be characterized by self-criticism, self-hatred, self-rejection, or depression.
 - Be driven to gain power, superiority, or control over others.
 - Not be able to accept compliments or expressions of love.
 - Be poor listeners, poor losers, or both.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

- Causes of low self-worth include faulty theological thinking/beliefs, sin and guilt, parent-child relationships, experiences of defeat/failure, unrealistic expectations, faulty thinking, community influences/myths.

Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 3rd ed.

There is a link between trauma and low self-worth.

Unforgiveness:

- Rooted in a trauma or bitter/evil experience.
- Refuses to let go of the wound/trauma.

- Sometimes involves unforgiveness towards another; sometimes towards our selves.
- Unforgiveness of a trauma/evil experience can result in resentment, anger, shame, or self-loathing that fester and build inside of us. – Tutu and Tutu
 - Notice these are also signs or causes of low self-worth.

Forgiveness:

- Know that it is commanded (Mt. 6:14). Forgiveness is rooted in the nature of God (1 Jn. 1:9).
- Forgiveness frees you from the perpetrator, even if that perpetrator is your historical self.
- Forgiveness is primarily for the one forgiving. It may have effects in the spiritual realm for the perpetrator. It may or may not affect/change the perpetrator.
- 4 Step process from Tutu:
 - Tell the story: In minute detail, describe what happened. Face the reality.
 - Name the Hurt: Moves beyond *facts* into *feelings*. Identify the things that cause the wound.
 - Grant Forgiveness Based on What Jesus has Done.
 - This incorporates seeing the other person as a human being, the interrelatedness of humans, and the *rightness* of forgiveness based on the *blood of Jesus* – not based on any action, guilt, or penance done by the person forgiven.
 - Signs of forgiveness include weight being lifted, joy, overwhelming peace, no longer wishing the perpetrator harm, and feeling freedom from the wounding event and person.
 - Renew or Release the Relationship. Renewal is building a new relationship out of the ashes of the old; releasing is letting the other person “go.”
- The perpetrator may or may not change based on your forgiveness. Forgiveness is primarily for the benefit of the one forgiving, secondly for the one forgiven.

Personal Reflection: Is there someone I need to forgive?

**Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth:
Healing Love of God and a Way Forward**
(Mt. 6:24-33; 2 Cor. 4:7; Gal. 5:16-26)

Introduction:

- Our focus today is the radical, healing love of God.
- Our main points will be: our trust in God is based on God's valuing of us (his love for us); we can attend to others properly because we see their worth; God's ultimate purpose for us is a holy life in obedience and in step with the Spirit of God.

God treasures us, so we can trust him:

- In Mt. 6:24-25, Jesus us invites us to trust/serve God rather than money. This is about where we place our security, which influences how we act.
- In Mt. 6:26, Jesus asks a rhetorical question aimed at producing a response of trusting in God: "Are you not of more value than they?"
- God treasures us, and his purposes for healing us are for the best (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:7).
- Ultimately, God's purpose is to have a Jesus-centered, loving, holy people in community for eternity.
- When we know our own value in God, then we will also grow in faith, trust, surety, certainty, in God.
- We will seek to attend to Jesus as the one of ultimate and supreme value, knowing that in our abandonment to him he will take care of us.

We See Others from God's Perspective:

- The most wretched sinner is a precious and worth-filled soul in need of salvation.
- In humility, we can give way and submit to others on many issues of preference and things that are not laid out clearly in Scripture (Phil. 2:3).
- We can stop comparing ourselves to others, stop being jealous or envious of others, but instead celebrate their success without it impinging our sense of worth (Gal. 5:26).

- Sometimes, fighting occurs when one party is unable or unwilling to submit to another party because of a belief that “my way is best.”
 - While there are times to hold one’s ground over Scriptural issues, safety issues, long term financial issues, etc., there are many times that its simply over preference.
 - Even if our way is “better” and would result in “better results,” is it worth hurting others over? Relationships are more important than performance.
 - There are exceptions, so this all needs to be thought through carefully. For example, being a supervisor at work means getting something done right, even if in the end feelings get hurt. This all requires discernment with God.

Ultimate Purpose of God for You:

- Living a holy life of obedience in step with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:24-25).
- God wants to shape and form people whose desires are God’s desires, whose strength is from God and character is matched with God’s character. Then he can empower them to navigate a holy life well.
- One huge component of this is understanding the gift of salvation, the gift of the new nature/life in God (2 Cor. 4:17; Romans 6). We receive this because we are treasured by God to receive it.

Carryout:

- What do you think God has for you as next steps?
- How do you think we can encourage/help others to find God’s healing in the West Liberty Community?
- How will having healthy self-worth change the way we do church, if at all?

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sunday School Session #6: God's Love Gives Power to Forgive

Date: July 7, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. In what ways does Jesus love us?
4. How can we position ourselves to experience the healing love of God?
5. What is forgiveness?
6. What is a process of forgiveness?
7. What was your experience of this Sunday School class? Please describe.

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Sermon #6: Healing Love of God and a Way Forward

Date: July 7, 2019

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

If you **do not wish** to participate in this survey, please check this box: ☐ I understand that this survey will be destroyed via shredding if the above box is checked.

Participants #:

1. What is a definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What was most helpful in the Sunday School session that was not in the Sermon?
4. What was most helpful to have repeated in both the Sunday School session and the Sermon time?
5. What was most helpful in the sermon that was not in the Sunday School class?
6. What was something you learned during the sermon that you did not pick up during the Sunday School class? If nothing, please write N/A.
7. What was your experience of this sermon? Please describe.
8. What are your beliefs regarding the severity of low self-worth after this sermon?
9. How has your answer to number 8 changed since the beginning of the curriculum, if there has been any change at all?

APPENDIX H

**PASTORAL DISCUSSION STARTER QUESTIONS AND POST-DISCUSSION
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

Pastoral Discussion Questions

Date:

Session #:

Preliminary: The purpose of this discussion is to help answer any questions you may have about low self-worth and about the healing love of God. It is not a pastoral counseling session. However, in order to safeguard us both as our conversation could touch on personal matters and how to handle various life situations, let's review my counseling policy so our conversation is not interrupted if the conversation drifts in that direction. (See Attached).

1. Do you agree to have this interview audio-recorded and information stored confidentially in a safe place?
2. Let's pray.
3. How are you doing? How is your soul?
4. What is your definition of low self-worth?
5. What are some signs someone may be experiencing low self-worth?
6. What would you like more information on based on what you have learned so far? What would you like clarity on?
7. Have you experienced low self-worth in your life, either in yourself or in an encounter with someone else?

8. If so, and in thinking about the experience, are you able to identify any causes of that experience of low self-worth? If you would like to talk about that situation with me to identify causes, feel free to let me know.

9. In your experience, do you see signs of low self-worth in our society? If so, would you please describe?

10-16. Do you have any questions regarding... (insert topics in Sunday School and Sermon times)?

17. What is the role of the love of God in our self-worth and or healing from low self-worth?

Post Discussion Interview Questions:

1. What is your definition of low self-worth?
2. Has this become clearer during our discussion?
3. What are some signs someone may be experiencing low self-worth?
4. Has this become clearer during our discussion?
5. Has our discussion enabled you to apply this information?
6. What's the role of God's love in healing from low self-worth?
7. How do we position ourselves and or help others be positioned for healing from low self-worth by the love of God?
8. Has the role of God's love become clearer during our discussion?
9. What was your experience of this pastoral discussion?
10. Based on your experience so far, how will the information you have learned in this curriculum affect your life going forward?

APPENDIX I
POST-SURVEY

***RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT LOW SELF-WORTH AND ABOUT THE
HEALING LOVE OF GOD:***

A Curriculum for Frequent Church Attendees

POST SURVEY

Instructions: Please answer every question. Please do not use any learning aids.

Participant #:

1. What is your definition of low self-worth?
2. What are some signs that someone may be experiencing low self-worth? Please list as many as possible.
3. What experiences might contribute to a sense of low self-worth?
4. What is your definition of healthy self-worth?
5. Based on your understanding, where is a Christian's self-worth found?
6. What are some signs of healthy self-worth?
7. What is the role of God's love in relation to a Christian's self-worth?
8. What steps could a person take to be positioned for healing from low self-worth?
9. What steps could a person with healthy self-worth take to help position a person with low self-worth for healing?
10. What do you believe regarding the severity of low self-worth?
11. Please describe your experience of the curriculum, "Raising Awareness about Low Self-Worth and about the Healing Love of God?"
12. How has your understanding about low self-worth and about the healing love of God changed throughout this curriculum?

13. What session(s) were most valuable to you in your experience of them?

(Example: the session on Gideon). If you do not remember them, please put N/A.

14. Rank the elements of the curriculum from (1) most important to (3) least important in your experience of them.

_____ Sunday School

_____ Sermon

_____ Pastoral Discussion

15. How will the knowledge learned in this curriculum affect your life going forward?

16. Based on question #15 above, are there specific next steps you will take based on this curriculum?

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